US009081499B2

(12) **United States Patent**
Kondo et al.

(10) **Patent No.: US 9,081,499 B2**
(45) **Date of Patent: Jul. 14, 2015**

(54) **MOBILE TERMINAL DEVICE AND INPUT DEVICE**

(75) Inventors: **Kazuhiro Kondo**, Kanagawa (JP); **Takashi Hasegawa**, Kanagawa (JP); **Tatsuhiko Nishimura**, Tokyo (JP); **Daisuke Matsui**, Tokyo (JP); **Masatoshi Inagawa**, Tokyo (JP); **Tetsuro Inukai**, Tokyo (JP)

(73) Assignees: **Sony Corporation**, Tokyo (JP); **Sony Mobile Communications AB**, Lund (SE)

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 393 days.

(21) Appl. No.: **12/906,668**

(22) Filed: **Oct. 18, 2010**

(65) **Prior Publication Data**

US 2011/0219302 A1 Sep. 8, 2011

Related U.S. Application Data

(60) Provisional application No. 61/309,467, filed on Mar. 2, 2010.

(51) **Int. Cl.**

G06F 3/048	(2013.01)
G06F 3/0488	(2013.01)
G06F 3/041	(2006.01)
G06F 3/0482	(2013.01)
G06F 3/0485	(2013.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**

CPC ***G06F 3/04886*** (2013.01); ***G06F 3/0416*** (2013.01); ***G06F 3/0482*** (2013.01); ***G06F 3/0485*** (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

USPC 715/830, 833

See application file for complete search history.

(56) **References Cited**

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

2004/0100479 A1 * 5/2004 Nakano et al. 345/700
2005/0034084 A1 * 2/2005 Ohtsuki et al. 715/864

(Continued)

FOREIGN PATENT DOCUMENTS

EP 2 051 158 A2 4/2009
EP 2 079 010 A2 7/2009
JP 2000-322181 A 11/2000
JP 2003-256117 A 9/2003

(Continued)

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Search Report issued Mar. 30, 2011 in European Patent Application No. 10197307.1-1527.

(Continued)

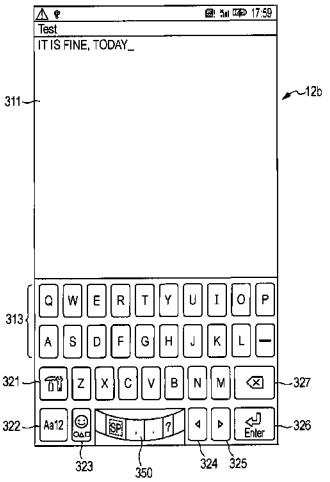
Primary Examiner — Thanh Vu

(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — Oblon, McClelland, Maier & Neustadt, L.L.P.

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A mobile terminal device includes a display section having a display screen, an input section having a touch input region on the display screen, and a control section for displaying a plurality of keys. The display screen is provided as a software keyboard where a touch operation on a specific key causes an input of the specific key. In the specific display region on the display screen that can display operation keys on the software keyboard, the control section selects these keys from a previously prepared set of input candidate key groups. In response to a specific operation on the specific display region, the control section allows the plurality of keys to be displayed on the specific display region. In response to touch on a desired key in the specific display region, the control section determines that an input of the key has been performed.

16 Claims, 28 Drawing Sheets



(56) **References Cited**

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

2005/0140654	A1*	6/2005	Chen	345/168
2008/0318635	A1	12/2008	Yoon et al.	
2009/0097753	A1	4/2009	Millington	
2009/0163250	A1*	6/2009	Park	455/566
2009/0167706	A1	7/2009	Tan et al.	
2009/0307631	A1	12/2009	Kim et al.	
2010/0004029	A1	1/2010	Kim	
2010/0115447	A1*	5/2010	Kuo et al.	715/773
2010/0164895	A1*	7/2010	Kim et al.	345/173

FOREIGN PATENT DOCUMENTS

JP	2009-288873	A	12/2009
WO	WO 2008/086319	A1	7/2008
WO	WO 2009/096646	A1	8/2009
WO	WO 2011/131989	A1	10/2011

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

European Office Action issued May 22, 2014 in Patent Application No. 10 197 307.1.

* cited by examiner

FIG. 1

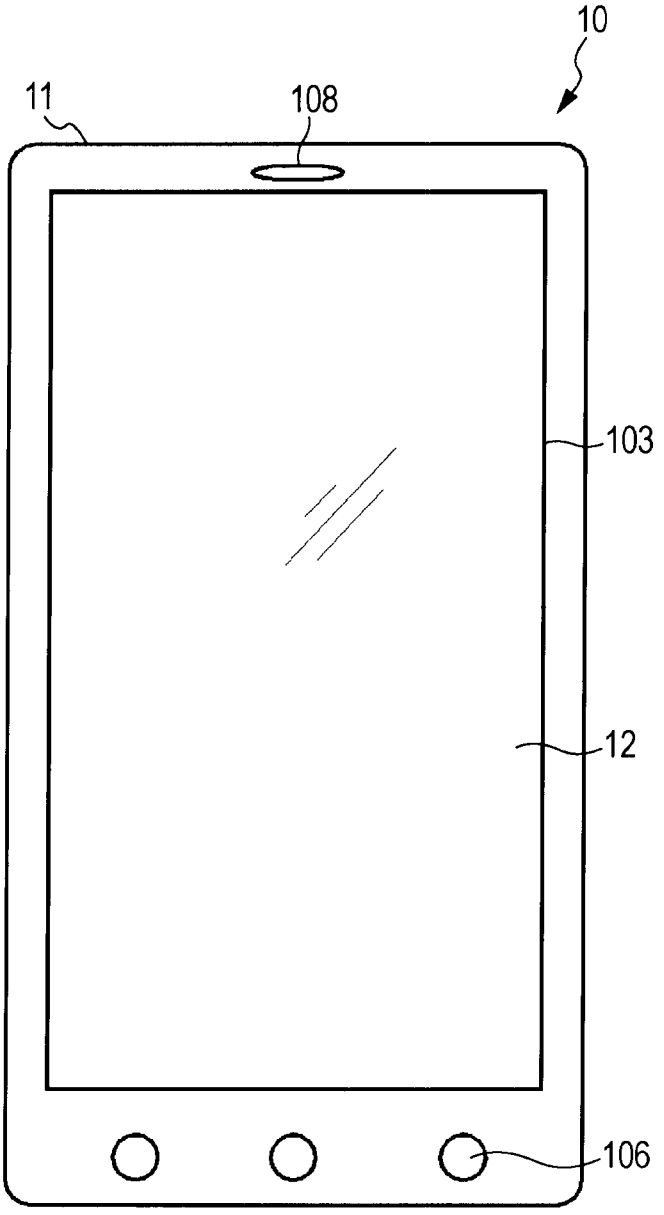


FIG. 2

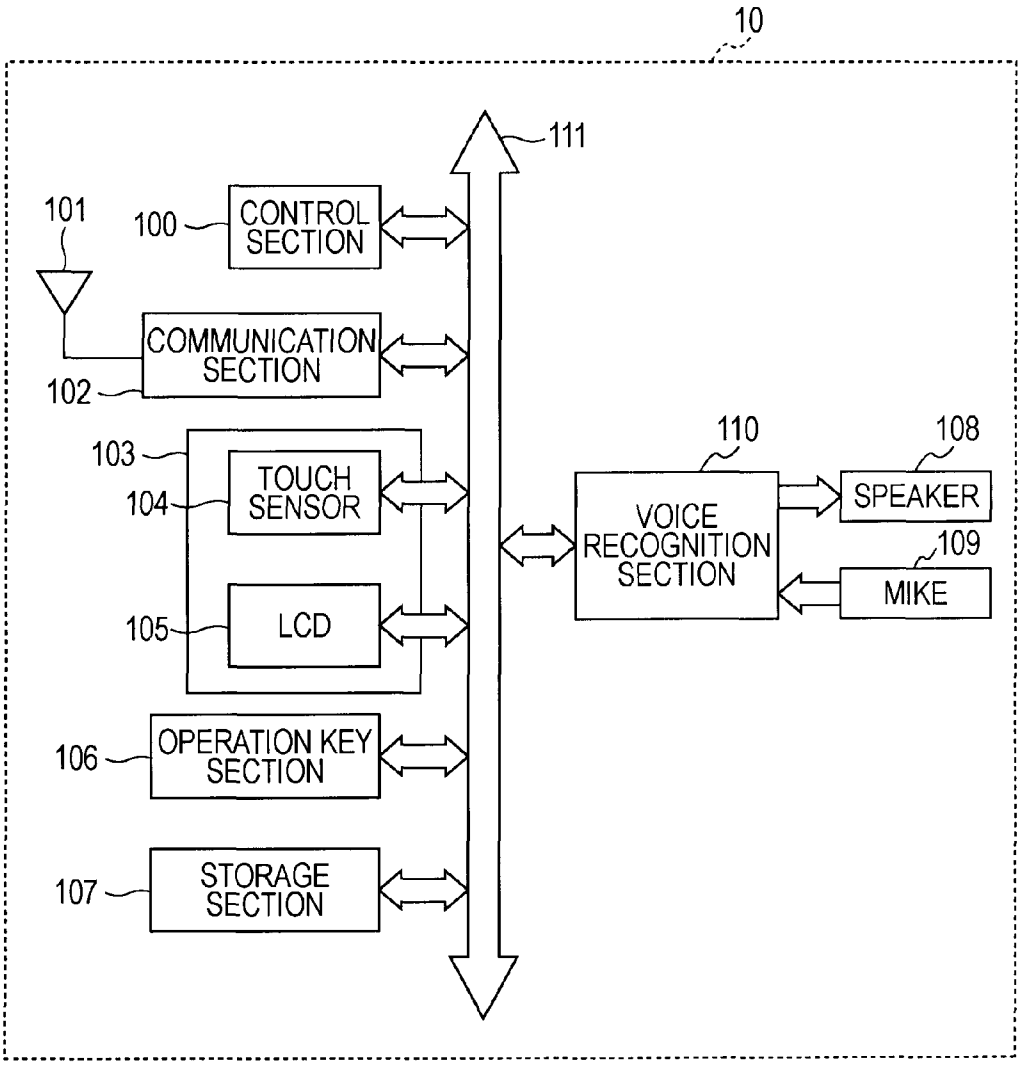

10
111
101
100
CONTROL SECTION
COMMUNICATION SECTION
102
103
104
TOUCH SENSOR
105
LCD
106
OPERATION KEY SECTION
107
STORAGE SECTION
110
VOICE RECOGNITION SECTION
108
SPEAKER
109
MIKE

FIG. 3

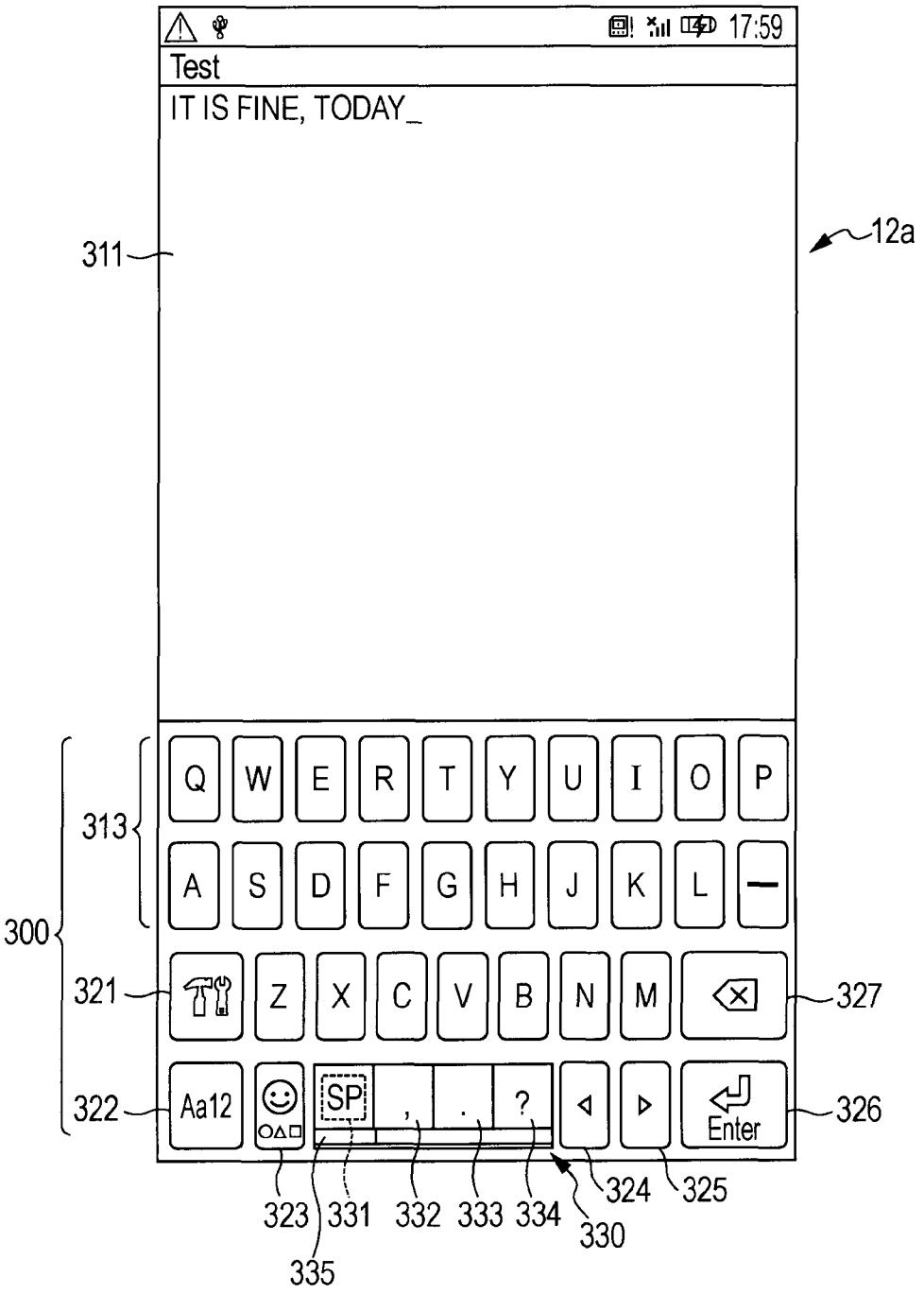

17:59
Test
IT IS FINE, TODAY_
311
12a
Q W E R T Y U I O P
A S D F G H J K L
Z X C V B N M
Aa12
SP
Enter
313
300
321
322
327
326
323
331
332
333
334
330
324
325
335

FIG. 4

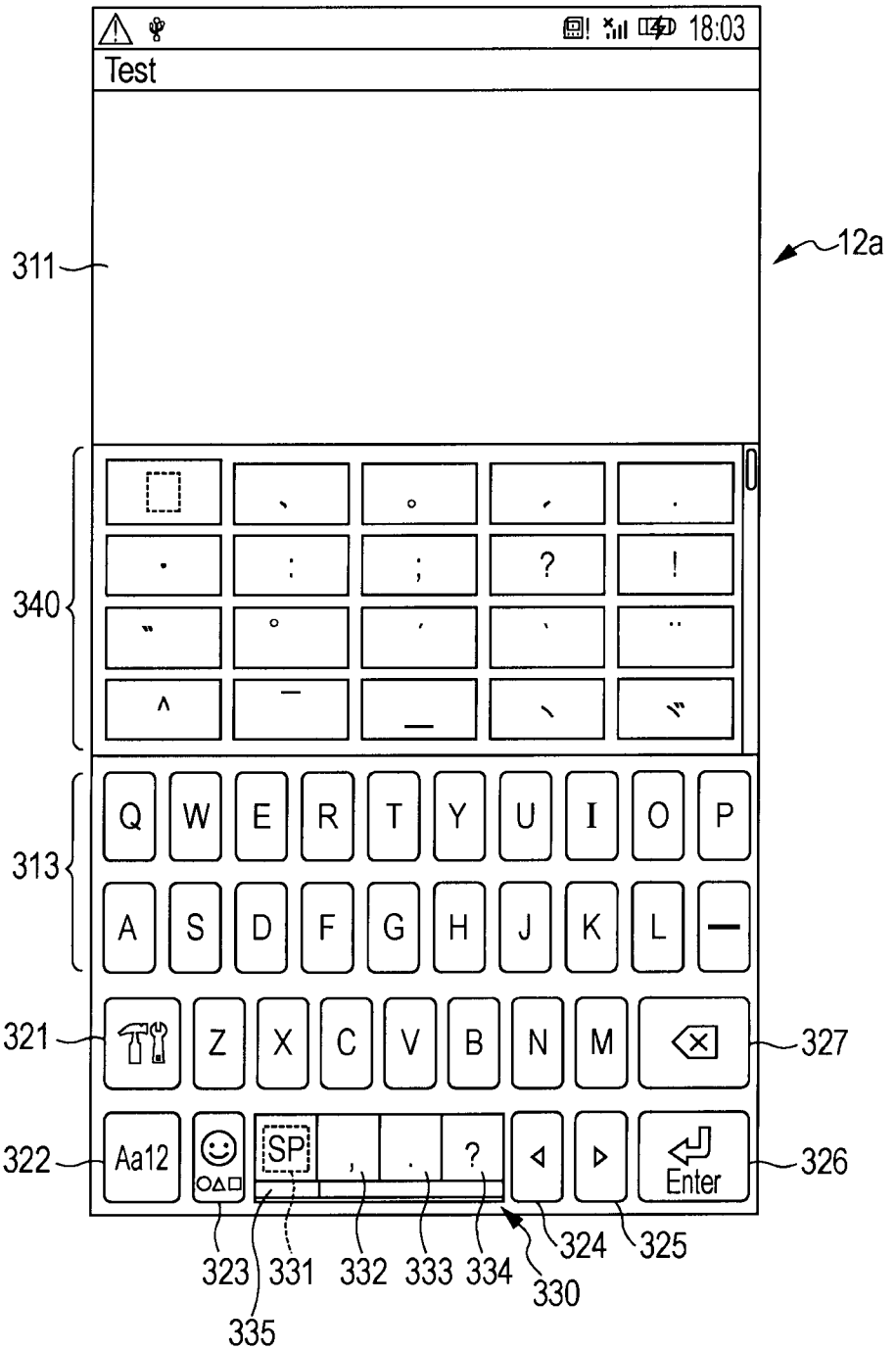

18:03
Test
311
12a
340
313
Q W E R T Y U I O P
A S D F G H J K L
321
Z X C V B N M
327
322
Aa12
SP
Enter
326
323
331
332
333
334
330
324
325
335

FIG. 5A

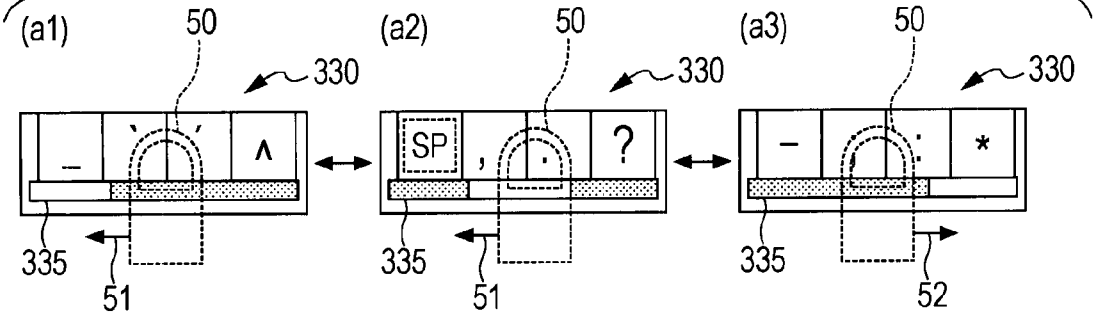


FIG. 5B

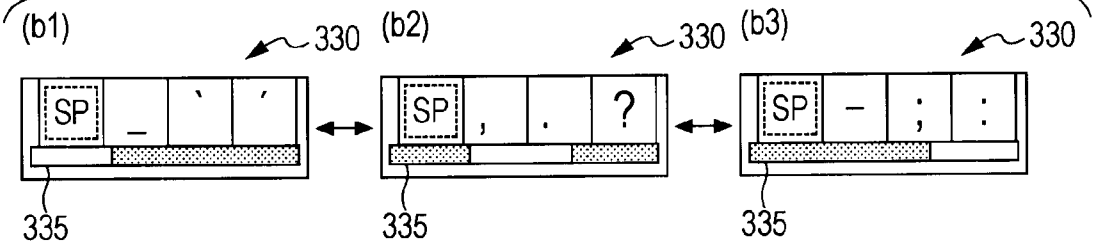


FIG. 5C

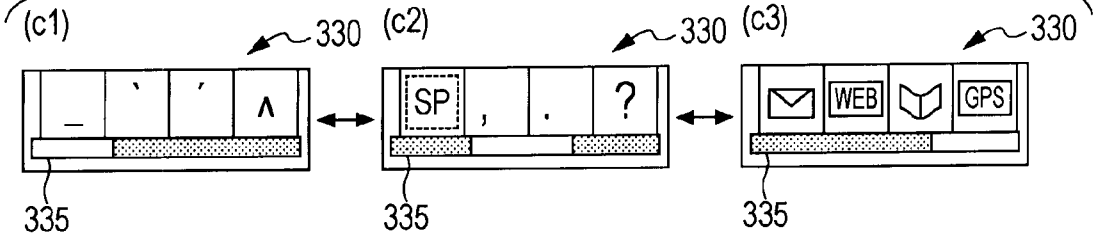


FIG. 5D

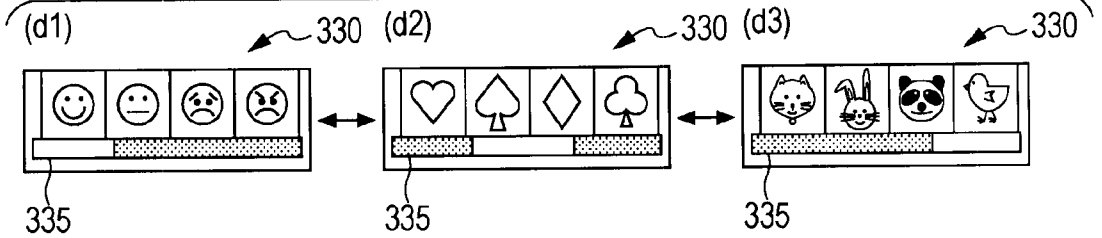


FIG. 5E

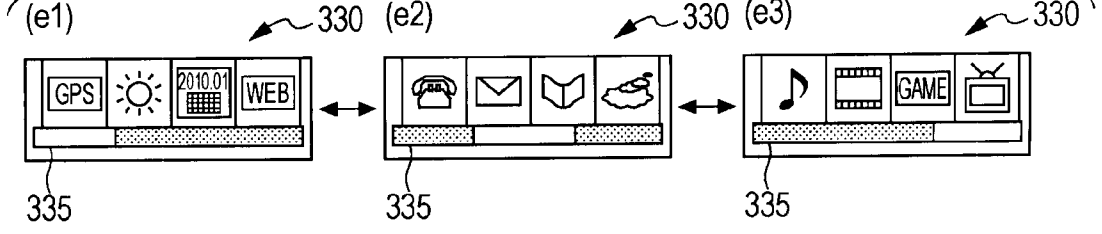


FIG. 6

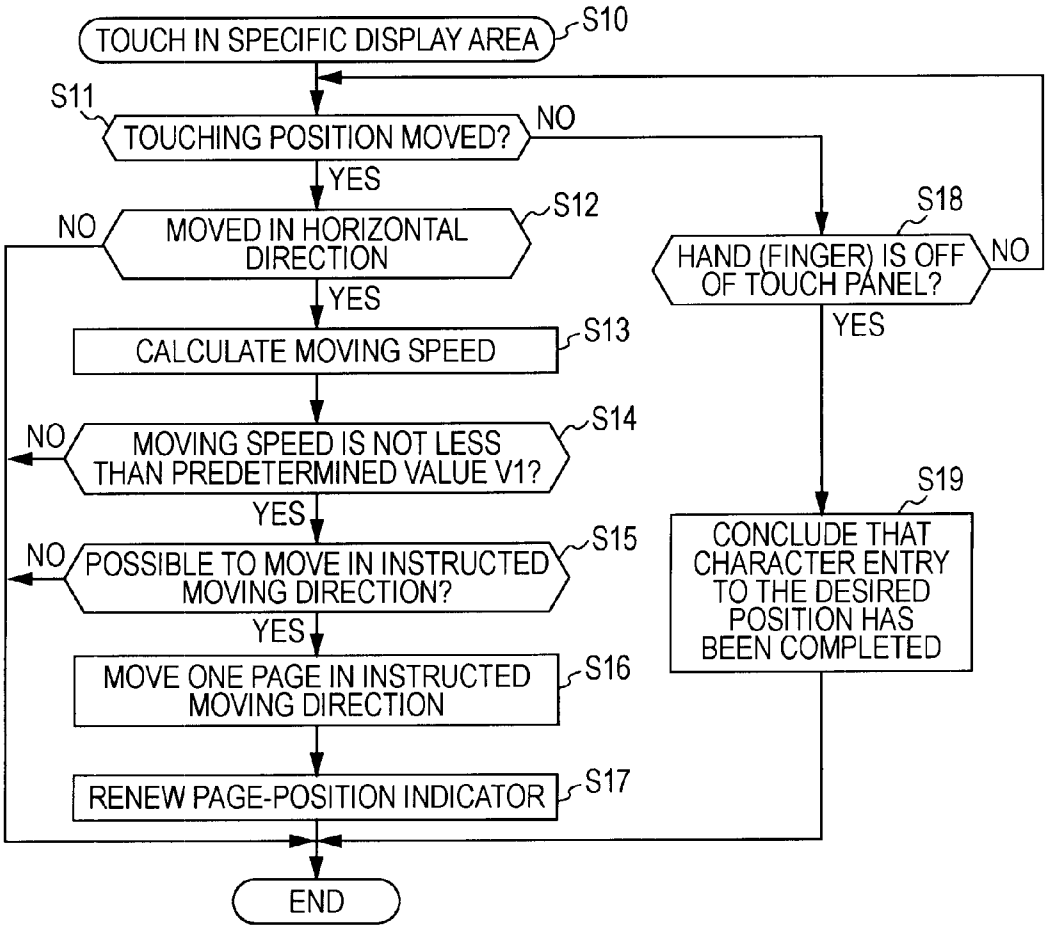

TOUCH IN SPECIFIC DISPLAY AREA
S10
S11
TOUCHING POSITION MOVED?
NO
YES
S12
NO
MOVED IN HORIZONTAL DIRECTION
YES
S13
CALCULATE MOVING SPEED
S14
NO
MOVING SPEED IS NOT LESS THAN PREDETERMINED VALUE V1?
YES
S15
NO
POSSIBLE TO MOVE IN INSTRUCTED MOVING DIRECTION?
YES
S16
MOVE ONE PAGE IN INSTRUCTED MOVING DIRECTION
S17
RENEW PAGE-POSITION INDICATOR
END
S18
HAND (FINGER) IS OFF OF TOUCH PANEL?
NO
YES
S19
CONCLUDE THAT CHARACTER ENTRY TO THE DESIRED POSITION HAS BEEN COMPLETED

FIG. 7

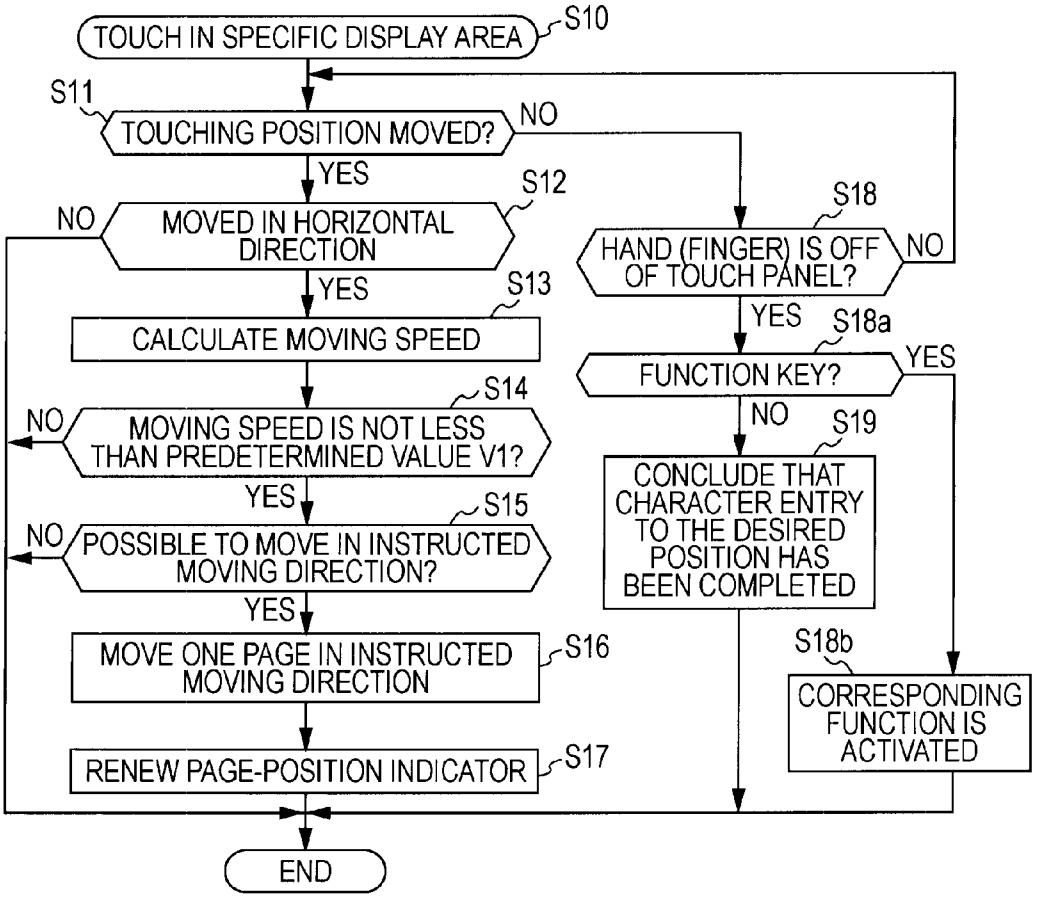

TOUCH IN SPECIFIC DISPLAY AREA
S10
S11
TOUCHING POSITION MOVED?
NO
YES
S12
NO
MOVED IN HORIZONTAL DIRECTION
YES
S13
CALCULATE MOVING SPEED
S14
NO
MOVING SPEED IS NOT LESS THAN PREDETERMINED VALUE V1?
YES
S15
NO
POSSIBLE TO MOVE IN INSTRUCTED MOVING DIRECTION?
YES
MOVE ONE PAGE IN INSTRUCTED MOVING DIRECTION
S16
RENEW PAGE-POSITION INDICATOR
S17
END
S18
HAND (FINGER) IS OFF OF TOUCH PANEL?
NO
YES
S18a
FUNCTION KEY?
YES
NO
S19
CONCLUDE THAT CHARACTER ENTRY TO THE DESIRED POSITION HAS BEEN COMPLETED
S18b
CORRESPONDING FUNCTION IS ACTIVATED

FIG. 8

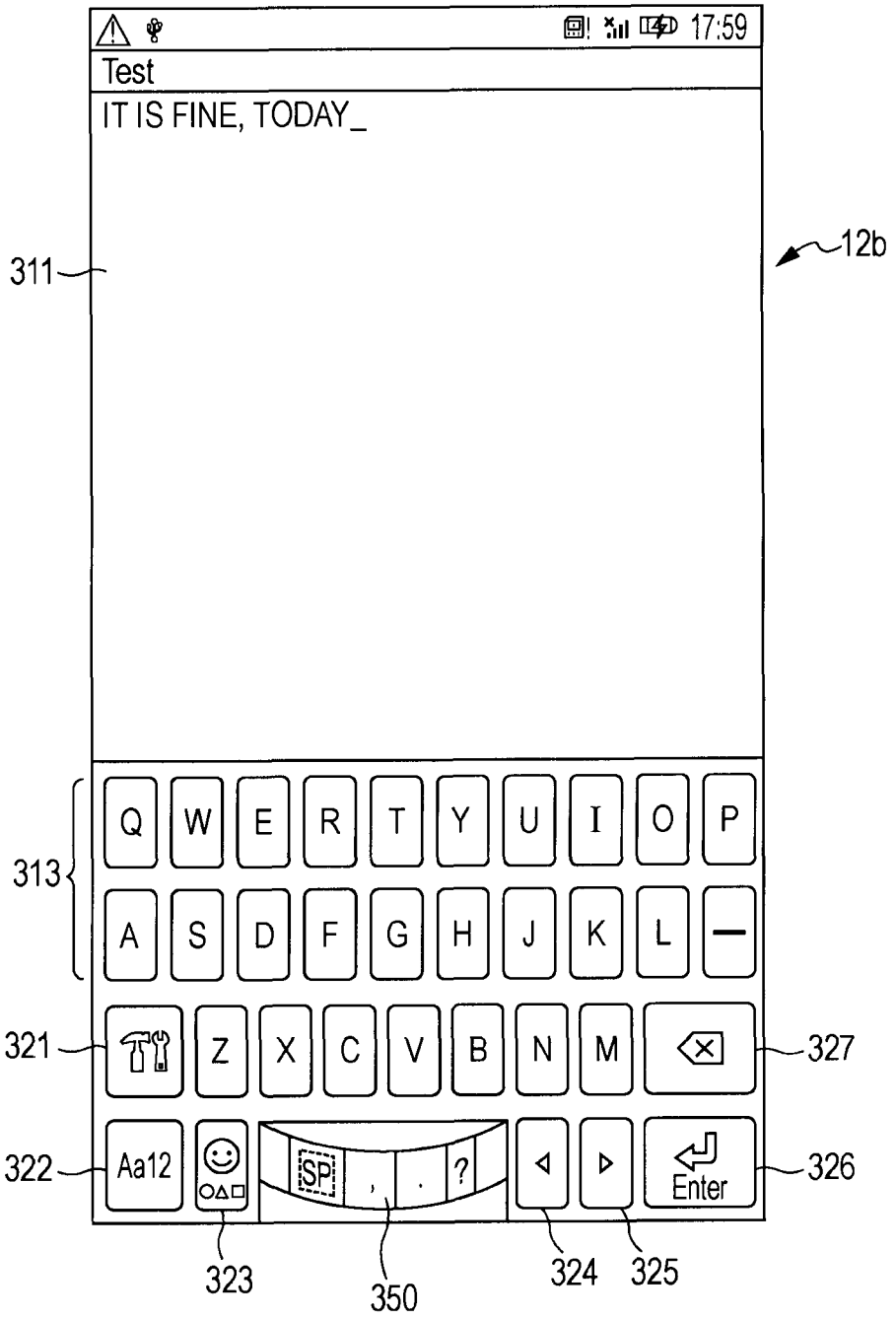

17:59
Test
IT IS FINE, TODAY_
311
12b
313
Q W E R T Y U I O P
A S D F G H J K L
321
Z X C V B N M
327
322
Aa12
SP
Enter
326
323
350
324
325

FIG. 9

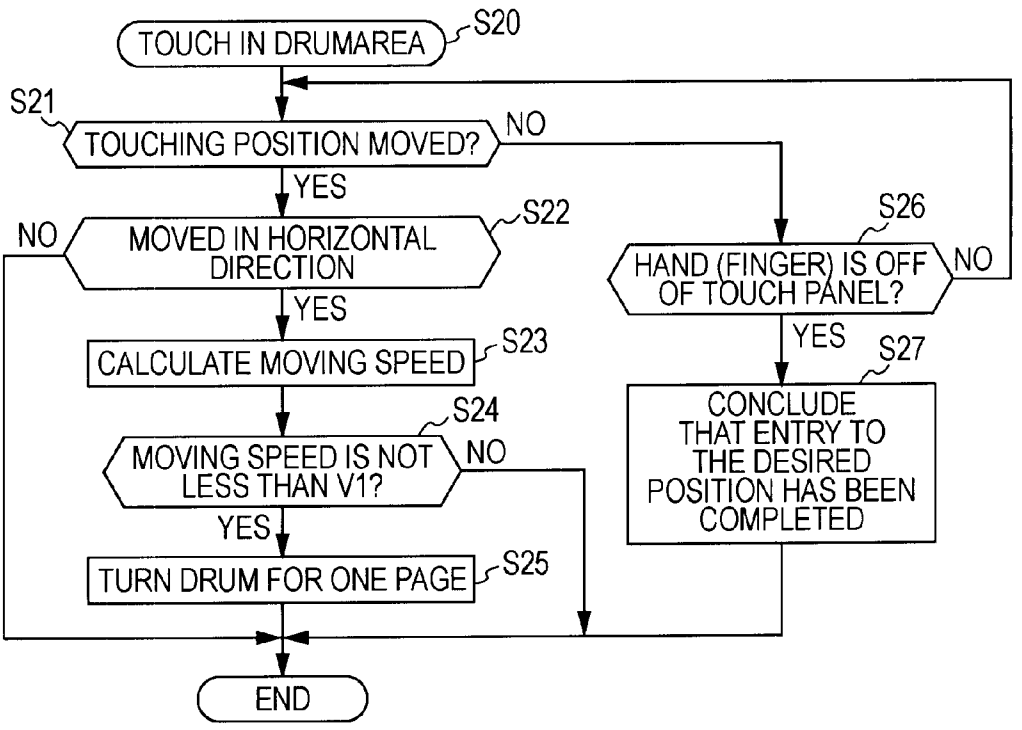

TOUCH IN DRUMAREA
S20
S21
TOUCHING POSITION MOVED?
NO
YES
S22
MOVED IN HORIZONTAL DIRECTION
NO
YES
S23
CALCULATE MOVING SPEED
S24
MOVING SPEED IS NOT LESS THAN V1?
NO
YES
S25
TURN DRUM FOR ONE PAGE
S26
HAND (FINGER) IS OFF OF TOUCH PANEL?
NO
YES
S27
CONCLUDE THAT ENTRY TO THE DESIRED POSITION HAS BEEN COMPLETED
END

FIG. 10

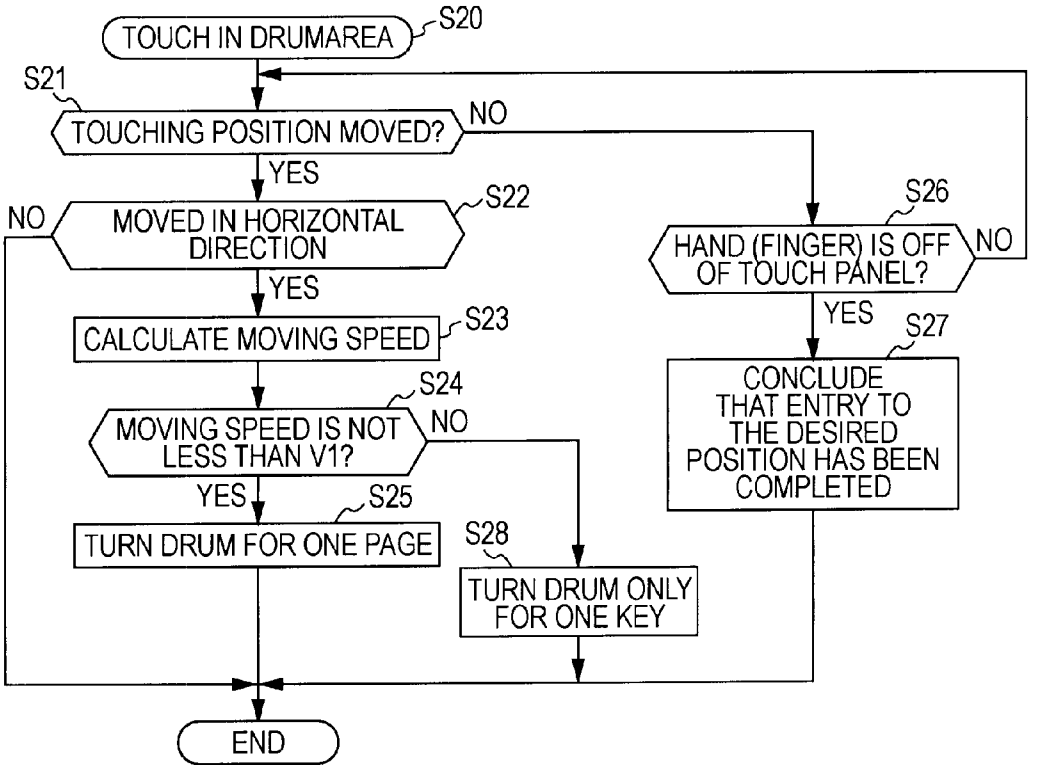
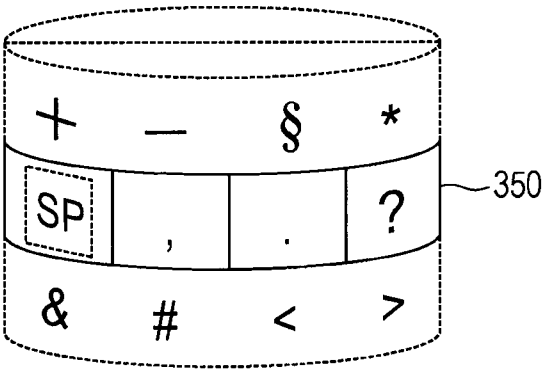

TOUCH IN DRUMAREA
S20
S21
TOUCHING POSITION MOVED?
NO
YES
S22
NO
MOVED IN HORIZONTAL DIRECTION
YES
CALCULATE MOVING SPEED
S23
S24
MOVING SPEED IS NOT LESS THAN V1?
NO
YES
S25
TURN DRUM FOR ONE PAGE
S28
TURN DRUM ONLY FOR ONE KEY
S26
HAND (FINGER) IS OFF OF TOUCH PANEL?
NO
YES
S27
CONCLUDE THAT ENTRY TO THE DESIRED POSITION HAS BEEN COMPLETED
END

FIG. 11



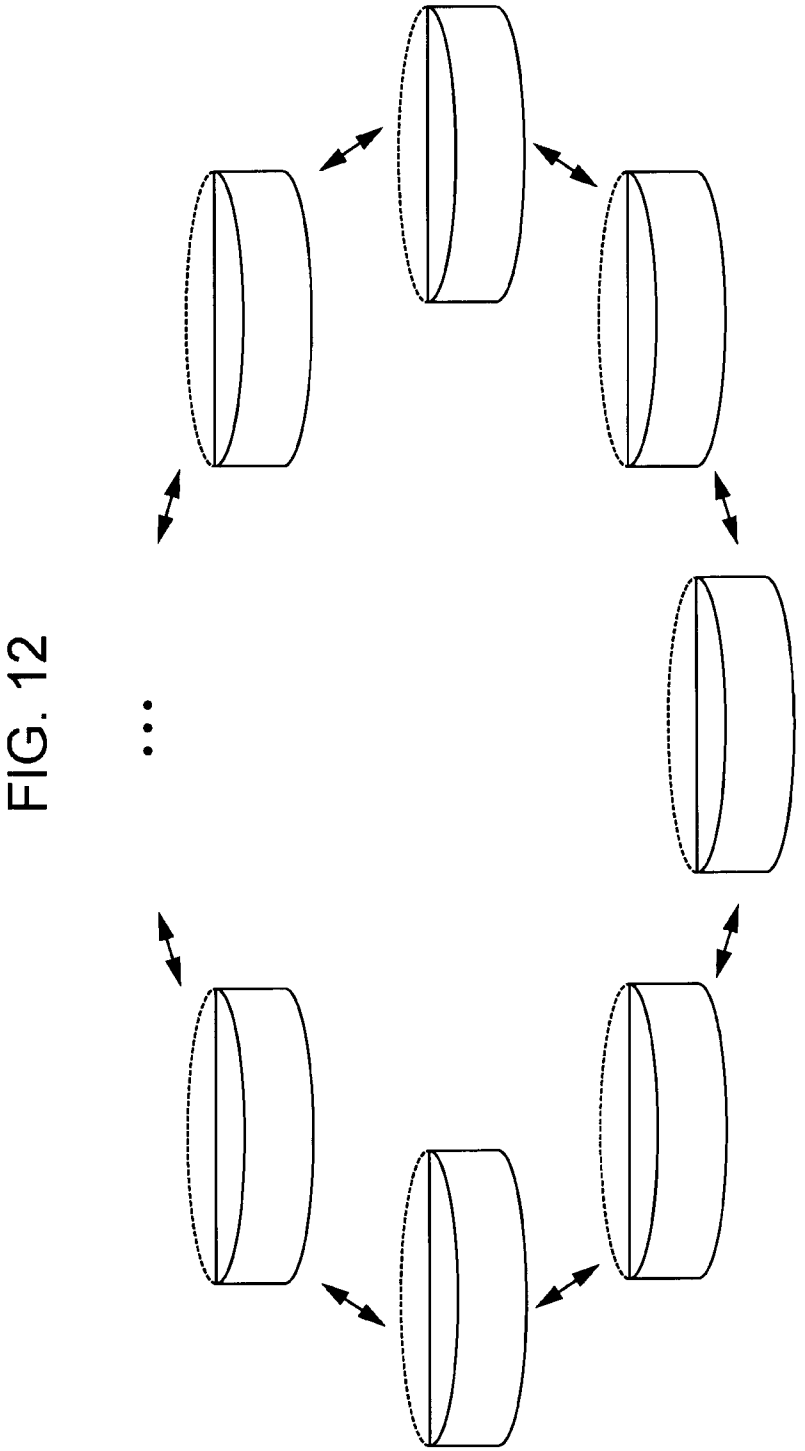


FIG. 12

FIG. 13

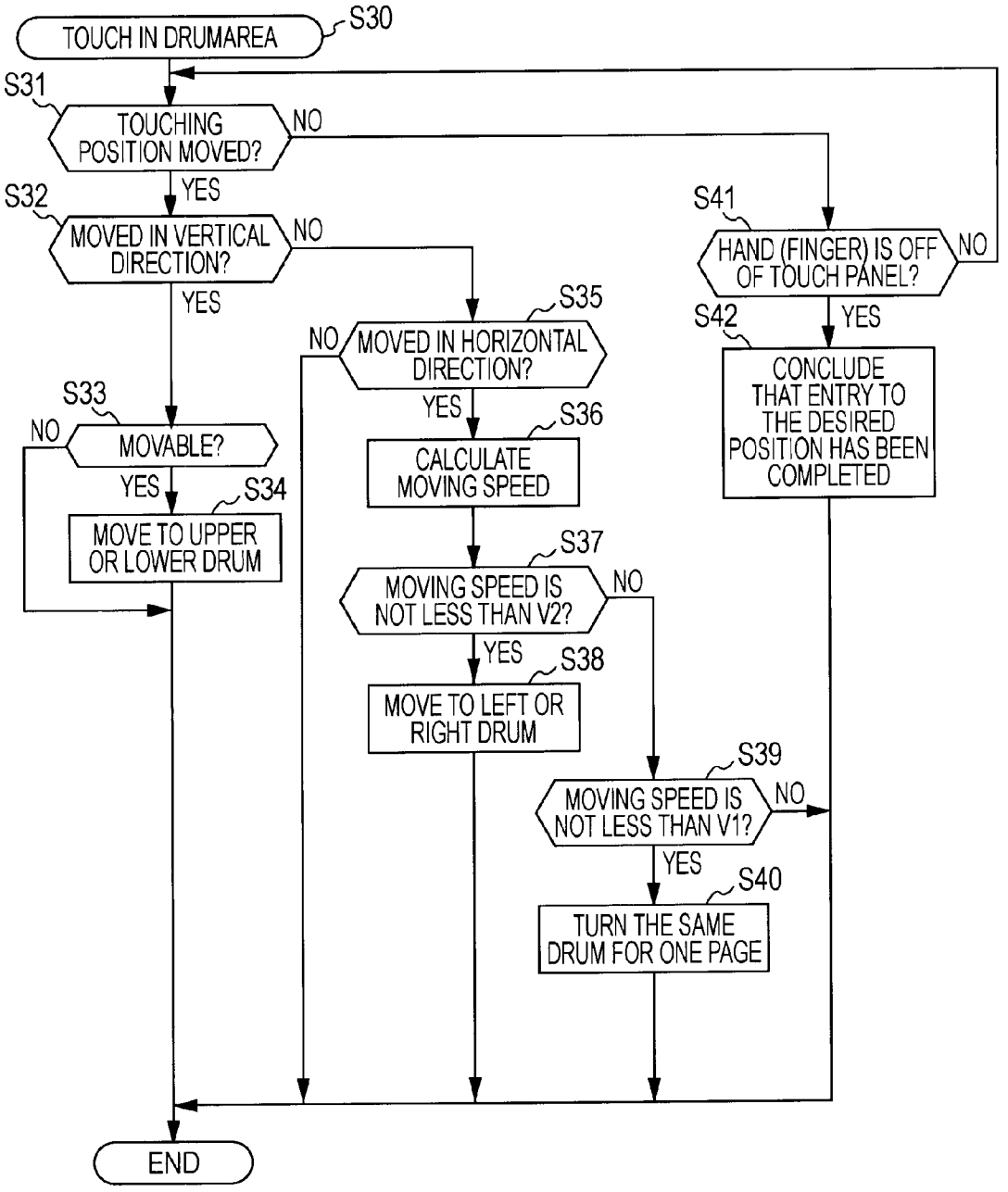

TOUCH IN DRUMAREA
S30
S31
TOUCHING POSITION MOVED?
NO
YES
S32
MOVED IN VERTICAL DIRECTION?
NO
YES
S33
NO
MOVABLE?
YES
S34
MOVE TO UPPER OR LOWER DRUM
S35
NO
MOVED IN HORIZONTAL DIRECTION?
YES
S36
CALCULATE MOVING SPEED
S37
MOVING SPEED IS NOT LESS THAN V2?
NO
YES
S38
MOVE TO LEFT OR RIGHT DRUM
S39
MOVING SPEED IS NOT LESS THAN V1?
NO
YES
S40
TURN THE SAME DRUM FOR ONE PAGE
S41
HAND (FINGER) IS OFF OF TOUCH PANEL?
NO
YES
S42
CONCLUDE THAT ENTRY TO THE DESIRED POSITION HAS BEEN COMPLETED
END

FIG. 14

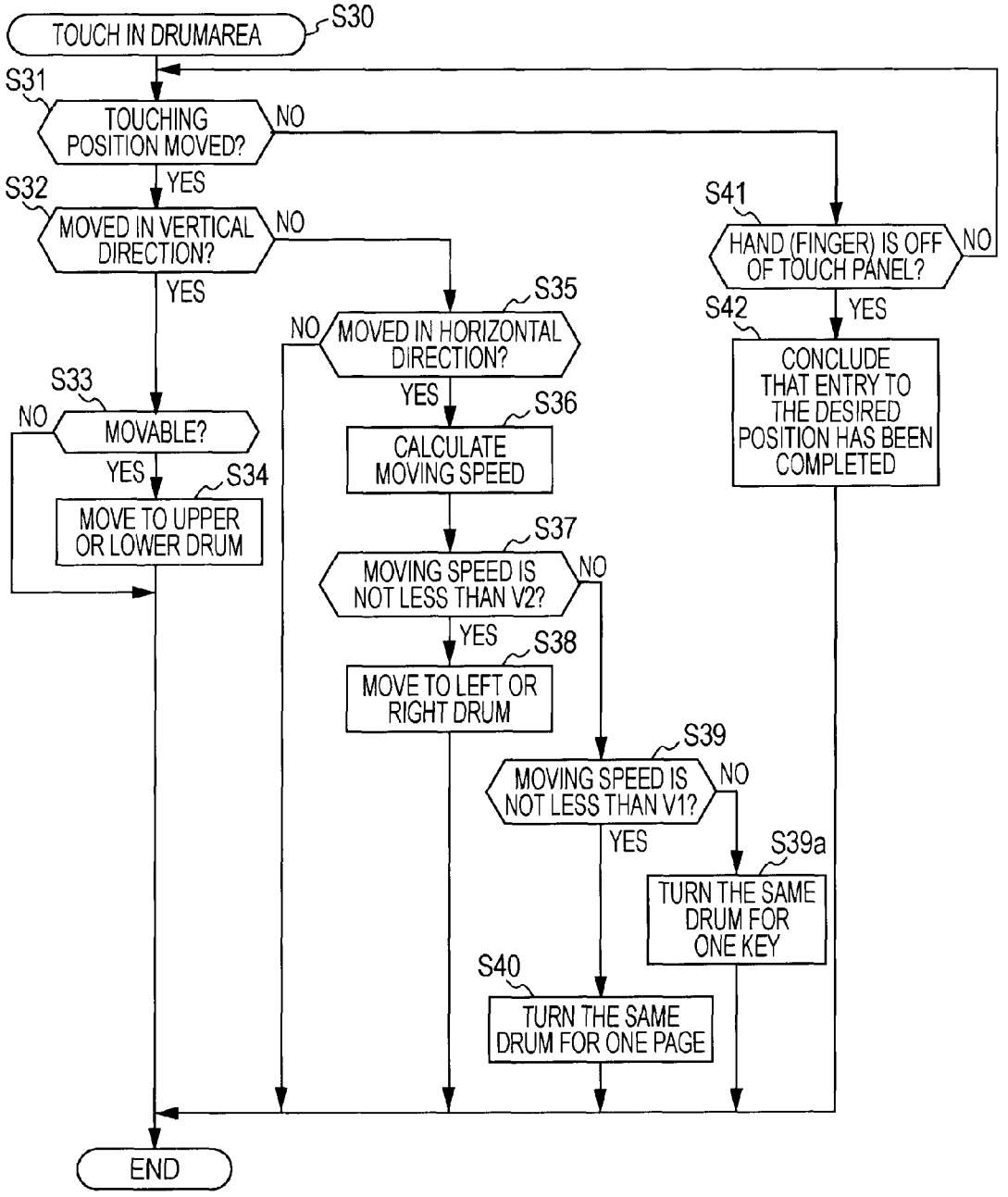

TOUCH IN DRUMAREA
S30
S31
TOUCHING POSITION MOVED?
NO
YES
S32
MOVED IN VERTICAL DIRECTION?
NO
YES
S33
NO
MOVABLE?
YES
S34
MOVE TO UPPER OR LOWER DRUM
S35
NO
MOVED IN HORIZONTAL DIRECTION?
YES
S36
CALCULATE MOVING SPEED
S37
MOVING SPEED IS NOT LESS THAN V2?
NO
YES
S38
MOVE TO LEFT OR RIGHT DRUM
S39
MOVING SPEED IS NOT LESS THAN V1?
NO
YES
S39a
TURN THE SAME DRUM FOR ONE KEY
S40
TURN THE SAME DRUM FOR ONE PAGE
S41
HAND (FINGER) IS OFF OF TOUCH PANEL?
NO
S42
YES
CONCLUDE THAT ENTRY TO THE DESIRED POSITION HAS BEEN COMPLETED
END

FIG. 15A

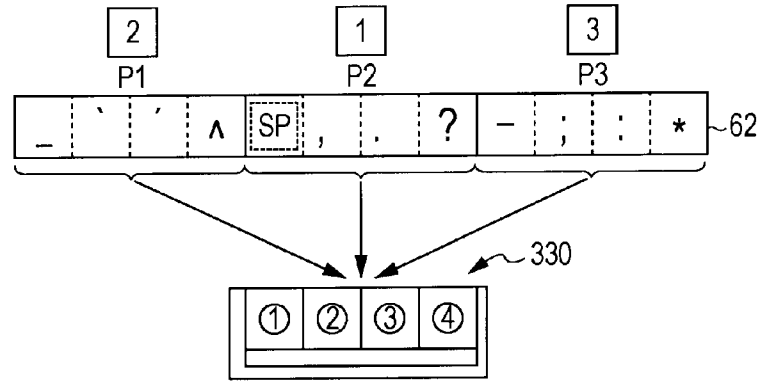


FIG. 15B

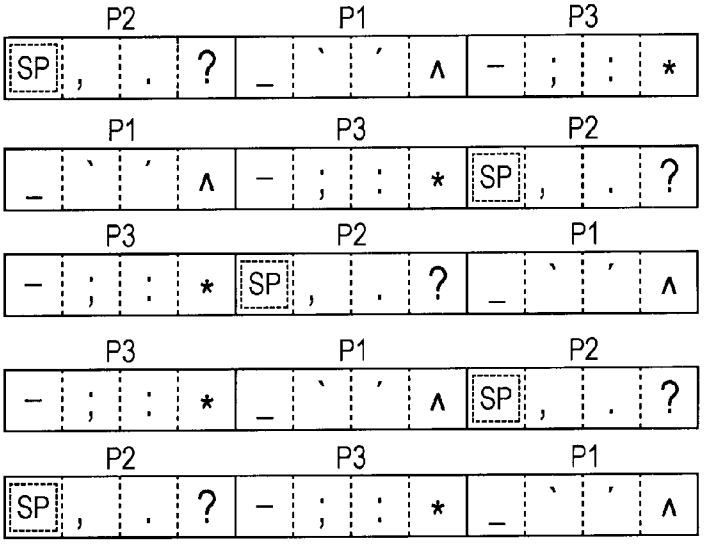


FIG. 15C

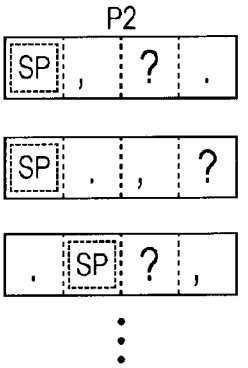


FIG. 16

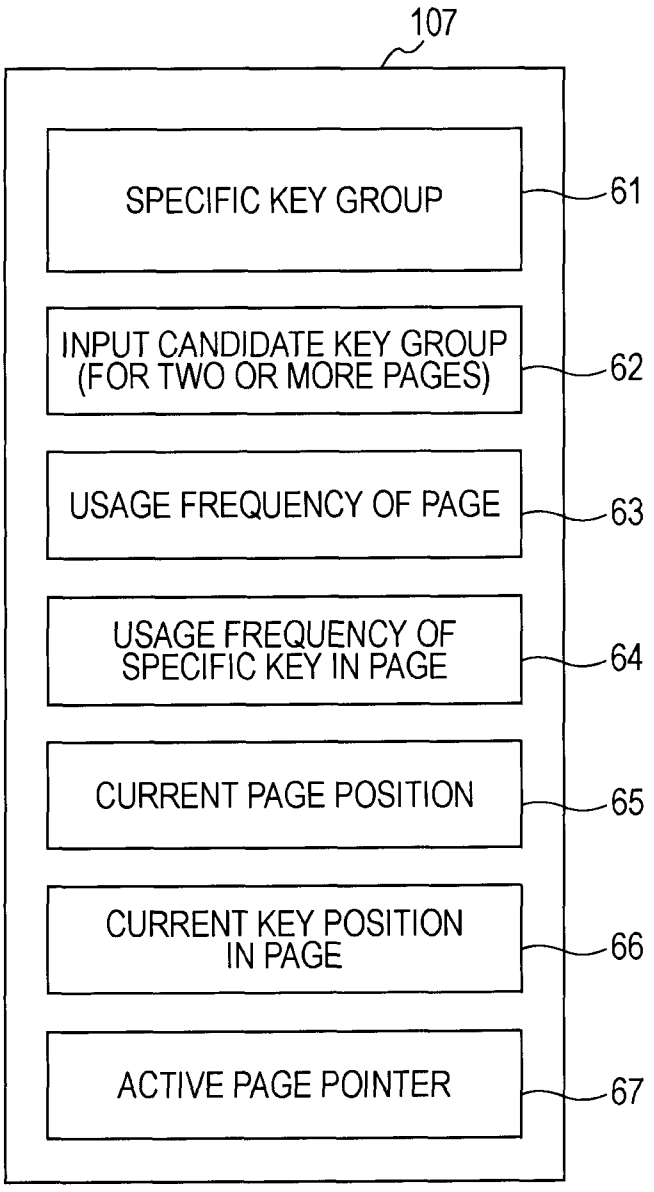

107
SPECIFIC KEY GROUP
61
INPUT CANDIDATE KEY GROUP (FOR TWO OR MORE PAGES)
62
USAGE FREQUENCY OF PAGE
63
USAGE FREQUENCY OF SPECIFIC KEY IN PAGE
64
CURRENT PAGE POSITION
65
CURRENT KEY POSITION IN PAGE
66
ACTIVE PAGE POINTER
67

FIG. 17

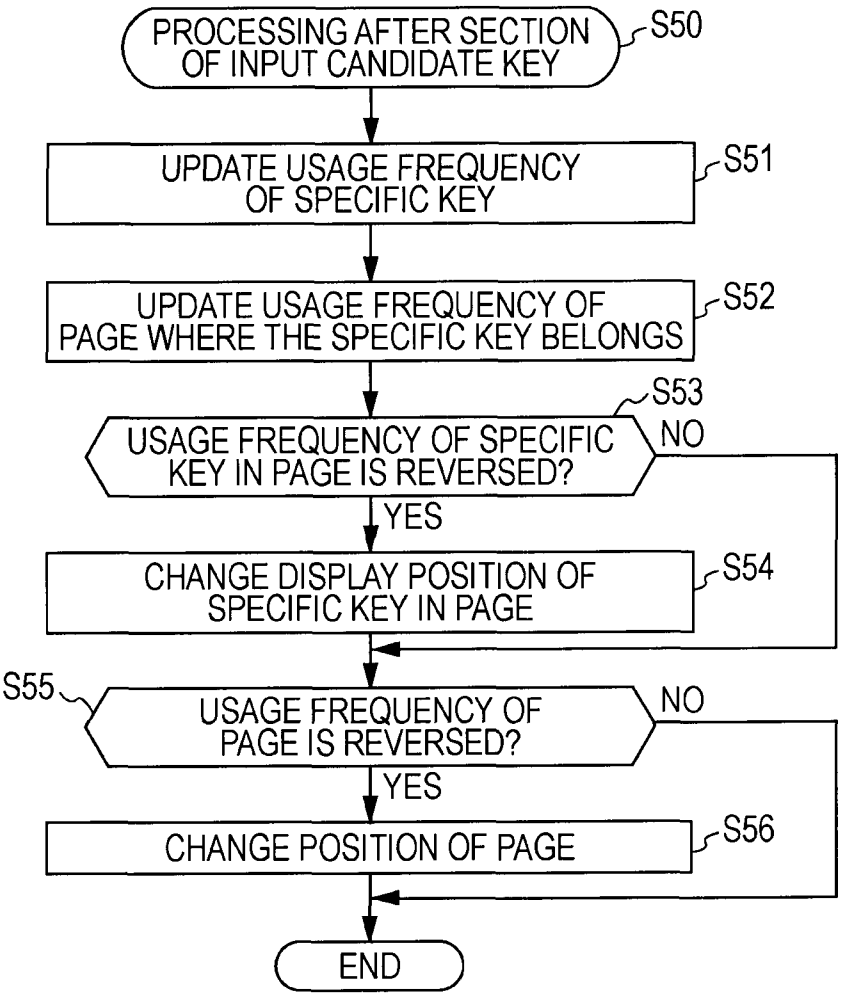

PROCESSING AFTER SECTION OF INPUT CANDIDATE KEY
S50
UPDATE USAGE FREQUENCY OF SPECIFIC KEY
S51
UPDATE USAGE FREQUENCY OF PAGE WHERE THE SPECIFIC KEY BELONGS
S52
S53
USAGE FREQUENCY OF SPECIFIC KEY IN PAGE IS REVERSED?
NO
YES
CHANGE DISPLAY POSITION OF SPECIFIC KEY IN PAGE
S54
S55
USAGE FREQUENCY OF PAGE IS REVERSED?
NO
YES
CHANGE POSITION OF PAGE
S56
END

FIG. 18

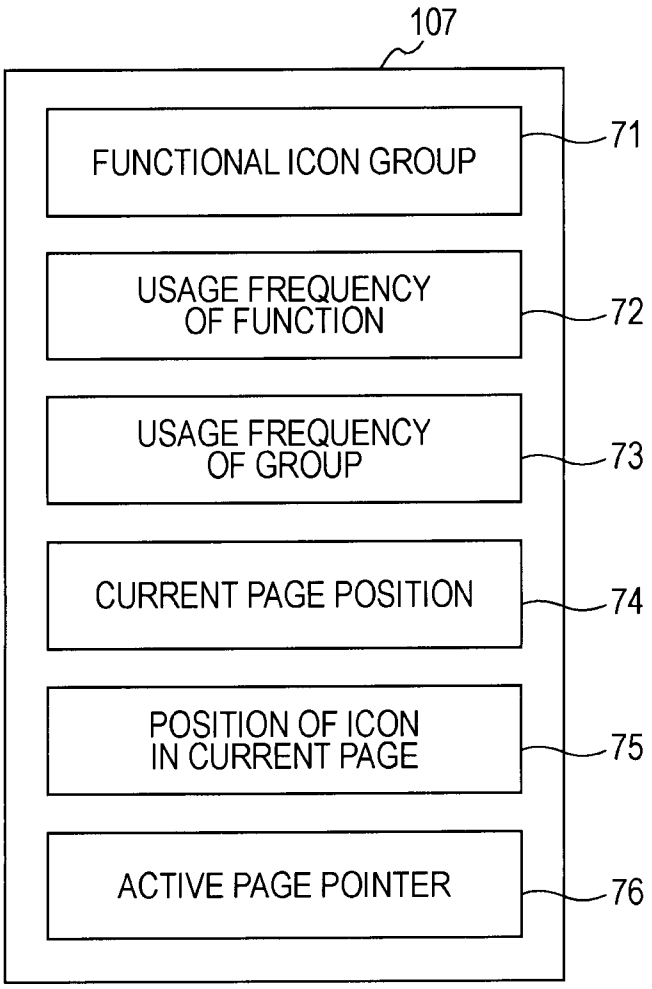

107
FUNCTIONAL ICON GROUP
71
USAGE FREQUENCY OF FUNCTION
72
USAGE FREQUENCY OF GROUP
73
CURRENT PAGE POSITION
74
POSITION OF ICON IN CURRENT PAGE
75
ACTIVE PAGE POINTER
76

FIG. 19

GROUP	ICON	NAME
A		TELEPHONE APPLICATION
A		MAILING APPLICATION
A		ADDRESS BOOK APPLICATION
A		MESSENGER APPLICATION
B		MUSIC APPLICATION
B		MOVIE APPLICATION
B	GAME	GAME APPLICATION
B		ONE-SEGMENT BROADCASTING APPLICATION
C	GPS	MAP APPLICATION
C		WEATHER APPLICATION
C	2010.01	SCHEDULE APPLICATION
C	WEB	WEB APPLICATION
D		INITIAL-SETTING APPLICATION
D		DATA BOX
D	CAMERA	CAMERA APPLICATION
D		CALCULATOR APPLICATION

A: MESSAGE GROUP
B: MEDIA GROUP
C: UTILITY FUNCTION GROUP
D: OTHERS

FIG. 20

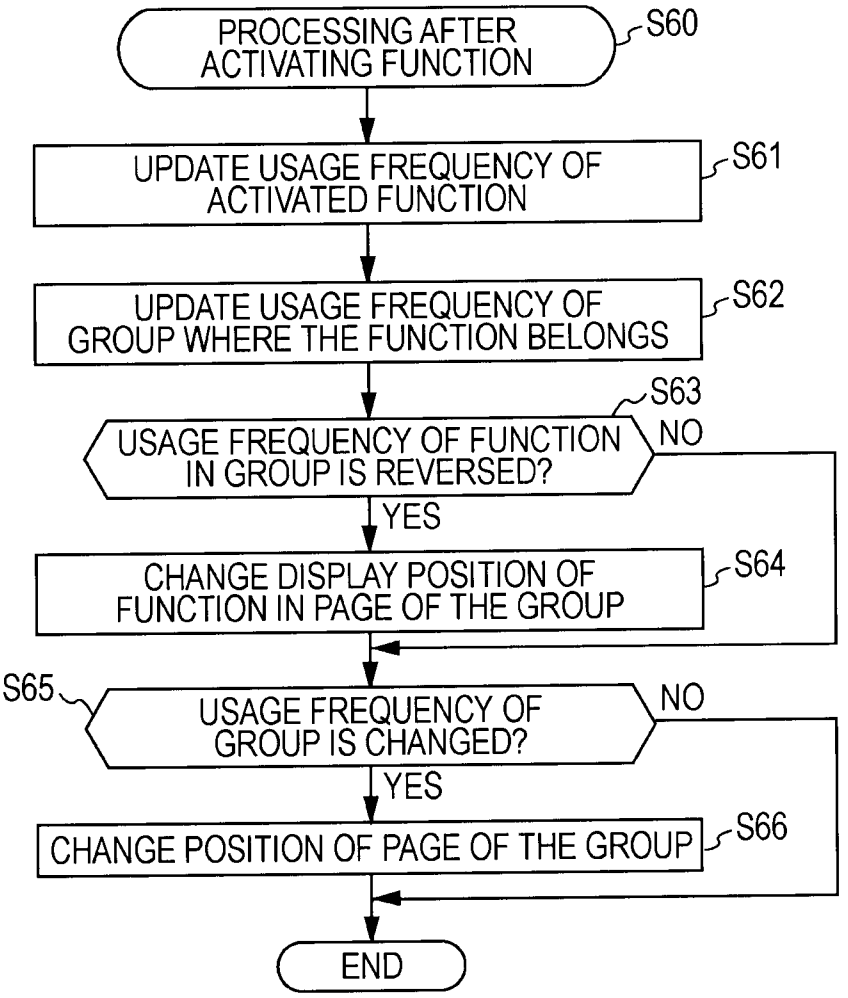

PROCESSING AFTER ACTIVATING FUNCTION
S60
UPDATE USAGE FREQUENCY OF ACTIVATED FUNCTION
S61
UPDATE USAGE FREQUENCY OF GROUP WHERE THE FUNCTION BELONGS
S62
S63
USAGE FREQUENCY OF FUNCTION IN GROUP IS REVERSED?
NO
YES
CHANGE DISPLAY POSITION OF FUNCTION IN PAGE OF THE GROUP
S64
S65
USAGE FREQUENCY OF GROUP IS CHANGED?
NO
YES
CHANGE POSITION OF PAGE OF THE GROUP
S66
END

FIG. 21

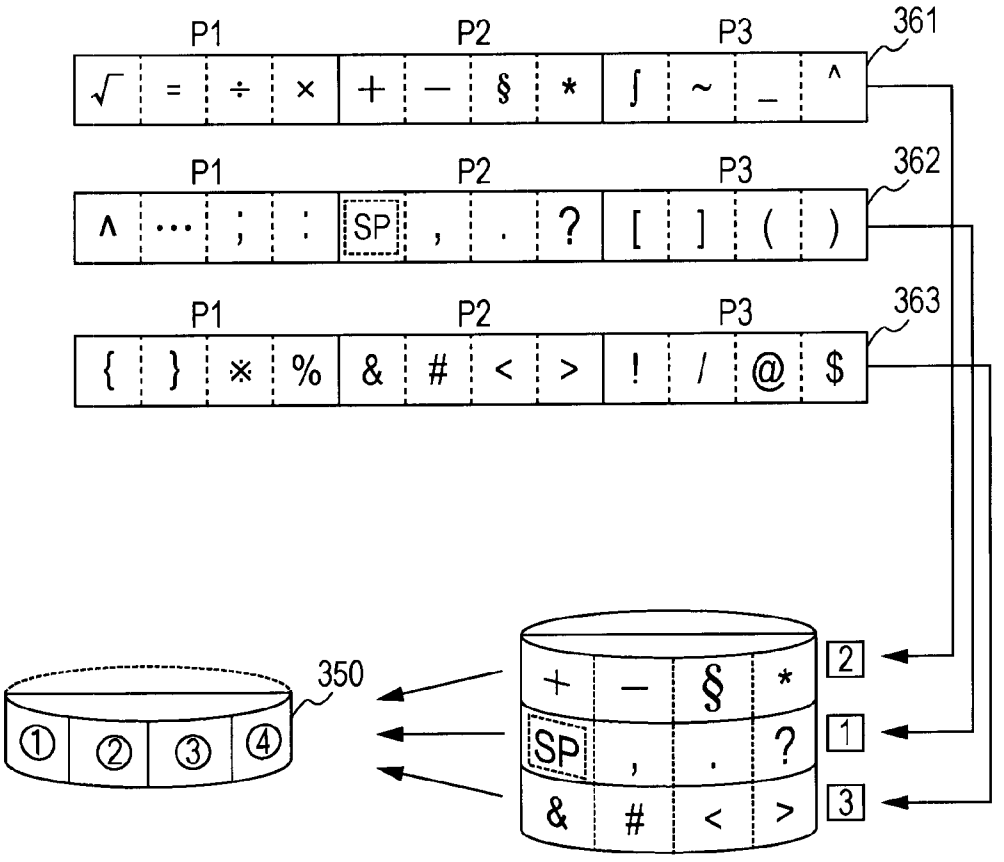


FIG. 22

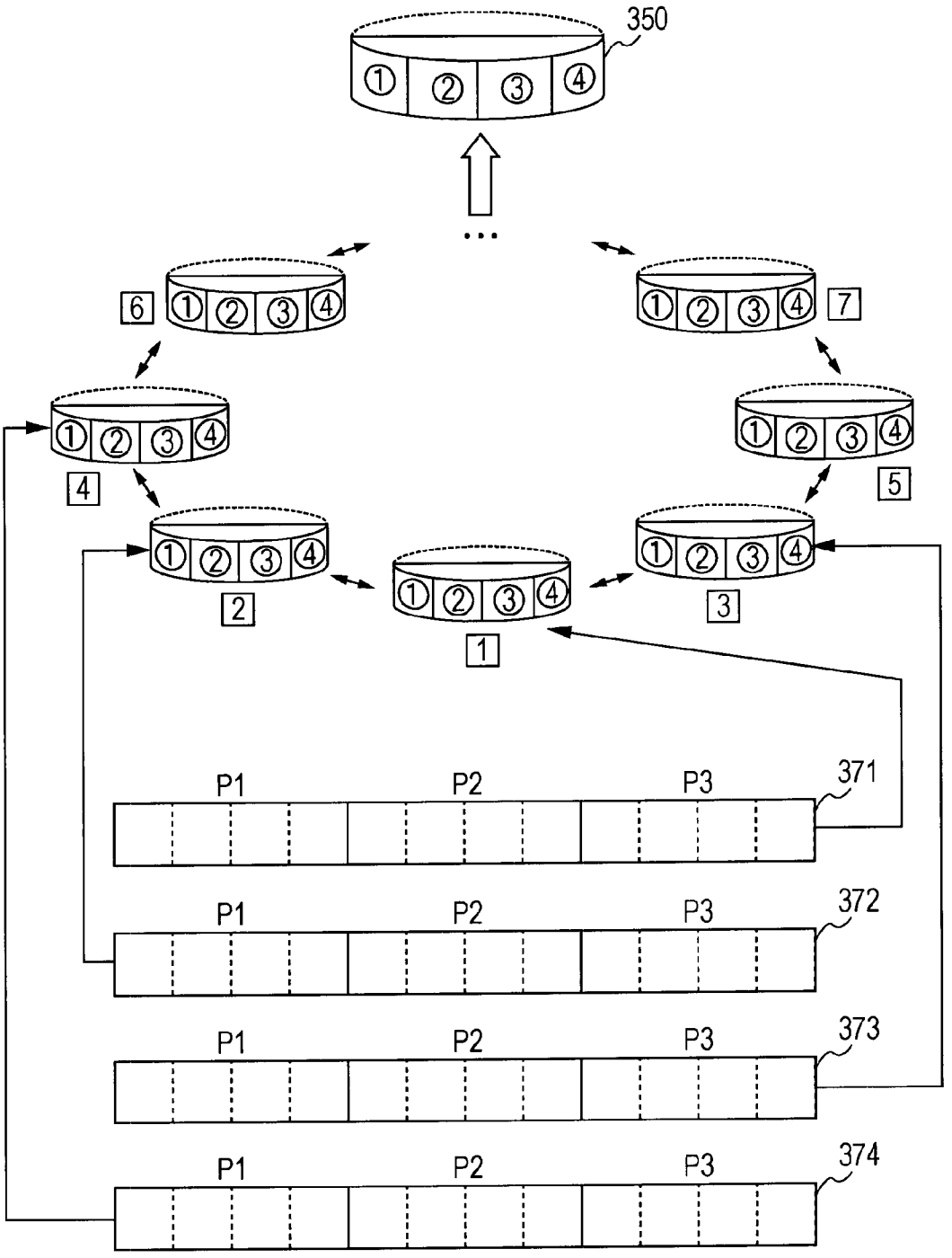


FIG. 23

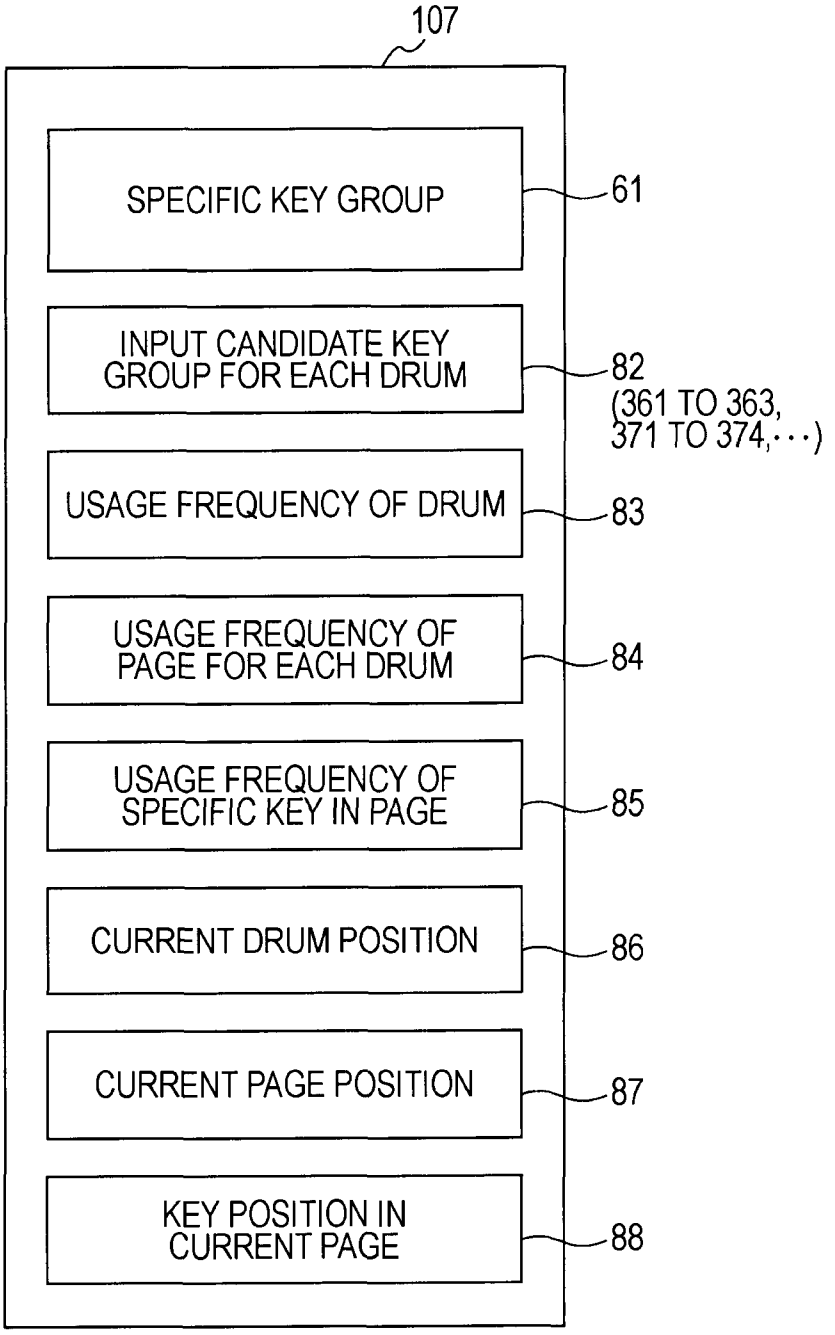

107
SPECIFIC KEY GROUP
61
INPUT CANDIDATE KEY GROUP FOR EACH DRUM
82
(361 TO 363, 371 TO 374,···)
USAGE FREQUENCY OF DRUM
83
USAGE FREQUENCY OF PAGE FOR EACH DRUM
84
USAGE FREQUENCY OF SPECIFIC KEY IN PAGE
85
CURRENT DRUM POSITION
86
CURRENT PAGE POSITION
87
KEY POSITION IN CURRENT PAGE
88

FIG. 24

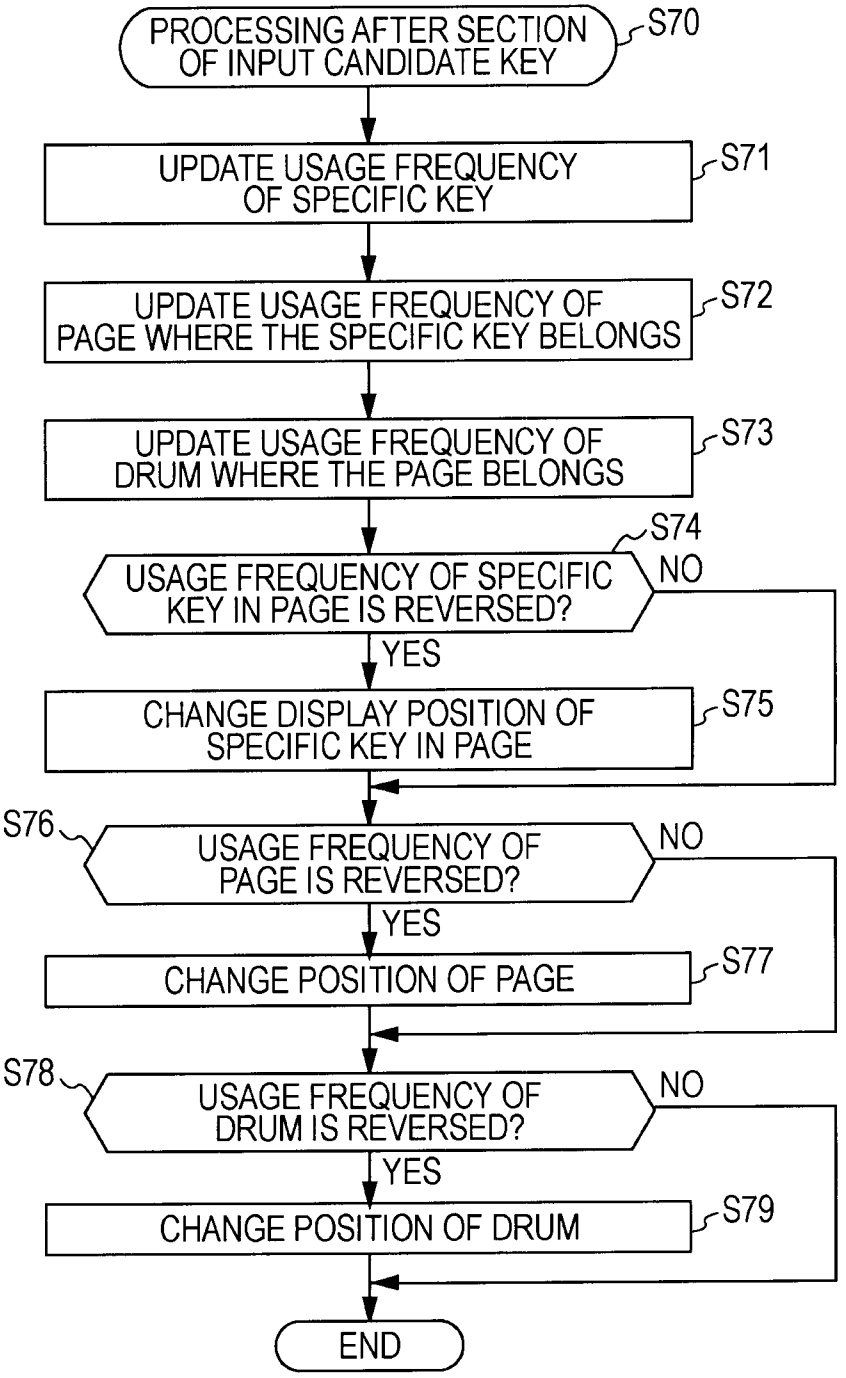

PROCESSING AFTER SECTION OF INPUT CANDIDATE KEY
S70
UPDATE USAGE FREQUENCY OF SPECIFIC KEY
S71
UPDATE USAGE FREQUENCY OF PAGE WHERE THE SPECIFIC KEY BELONGS
S72
UPDATE USAGE FREQUENCY OF DRUM WHERE THE PAGE BELONGS
S73
S74
USAGE FREQUENCY OF SPECIFIC KEY IN PAGE IS REVERSED?
NO
YES
CHANGE DISPLAY POSITION OF SPECIFIC KEY IN PAGE
S75
S76
USAGE FREQUENCY OF PAGE IS REVERSED?
NO
YES
CHANGE POSITION OF PAGE
S77
S78
USAGE FREQUENCY OF DRUM IS REVERSED?
NO
YES
CHANGE POSITION OF DRUM
S79
END

FIG. 25

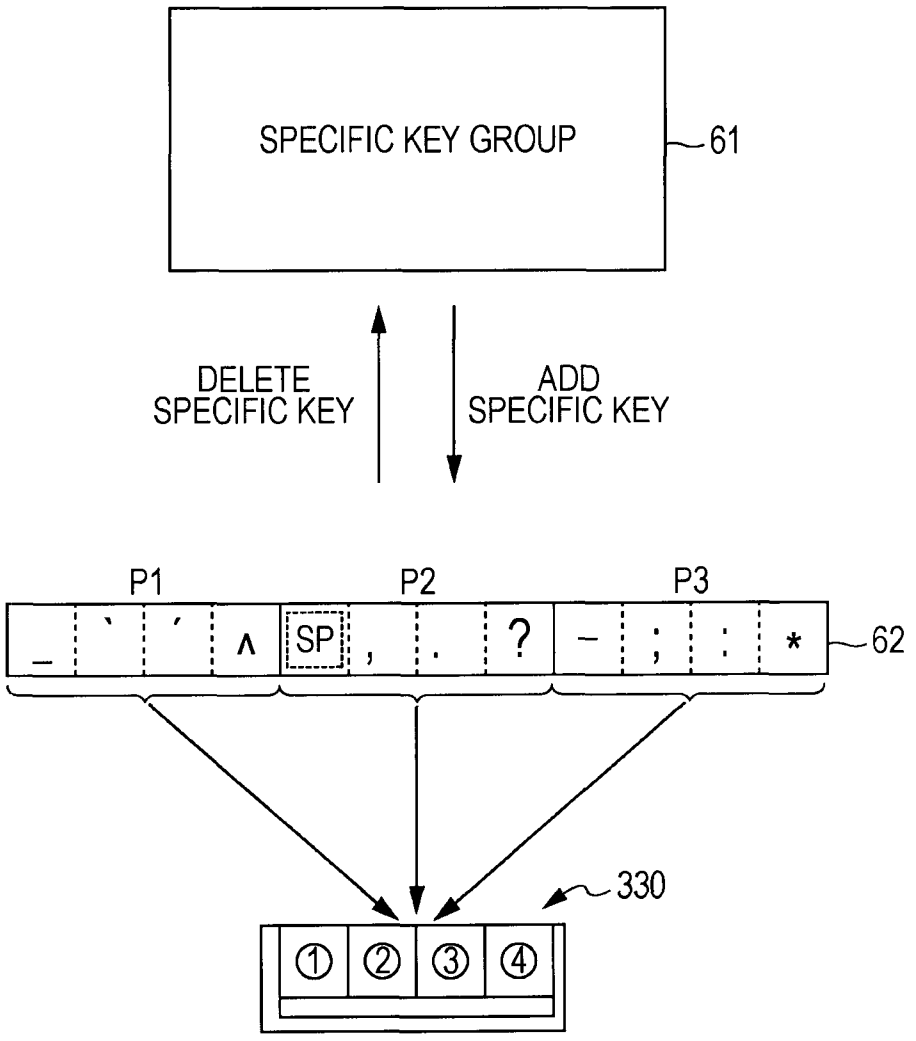

SPECIFIC KEY GROUP
61
DELETE SPECIFIC KEY
ADD SPECIFIC KEY
P1
P2
P3
_
`
´
^
SP
,
.
?
–
;
:
*
62
330
①
②
③
④

FIG. 26

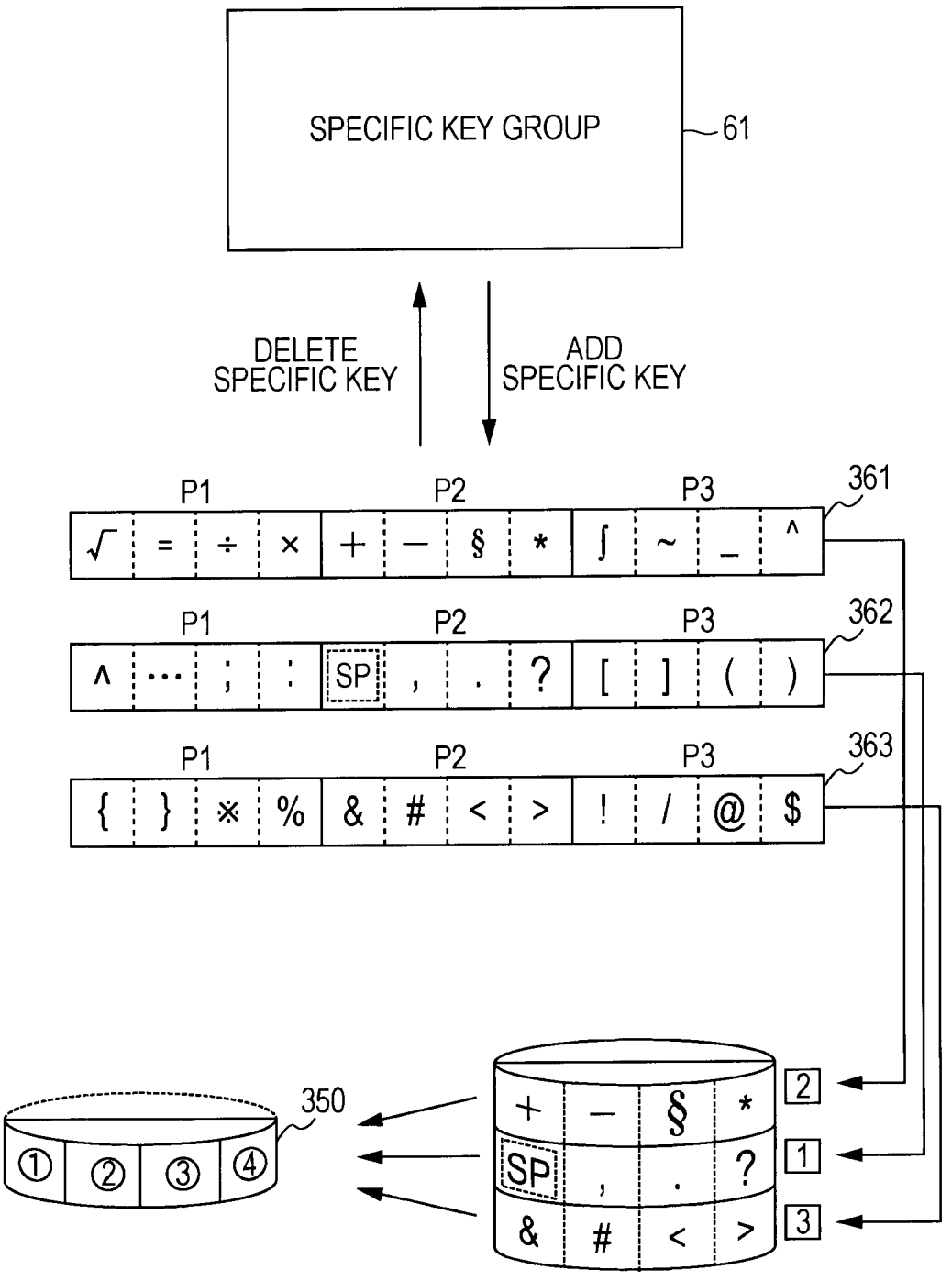

SPECIFIC KEY GROUP
61
DELETE SPECIFIC KEY
ADD SPECIFIC KEY
P1
P2
P3
361
√ = ÷ × + − § * ∫ ~ _ ^
362
∧ ··· ; : SP , . ? [ ] ( )
363
{ } ※ % & # < > ! / @ $
350
① ② ③ ④
2
1
3

FIG. 27

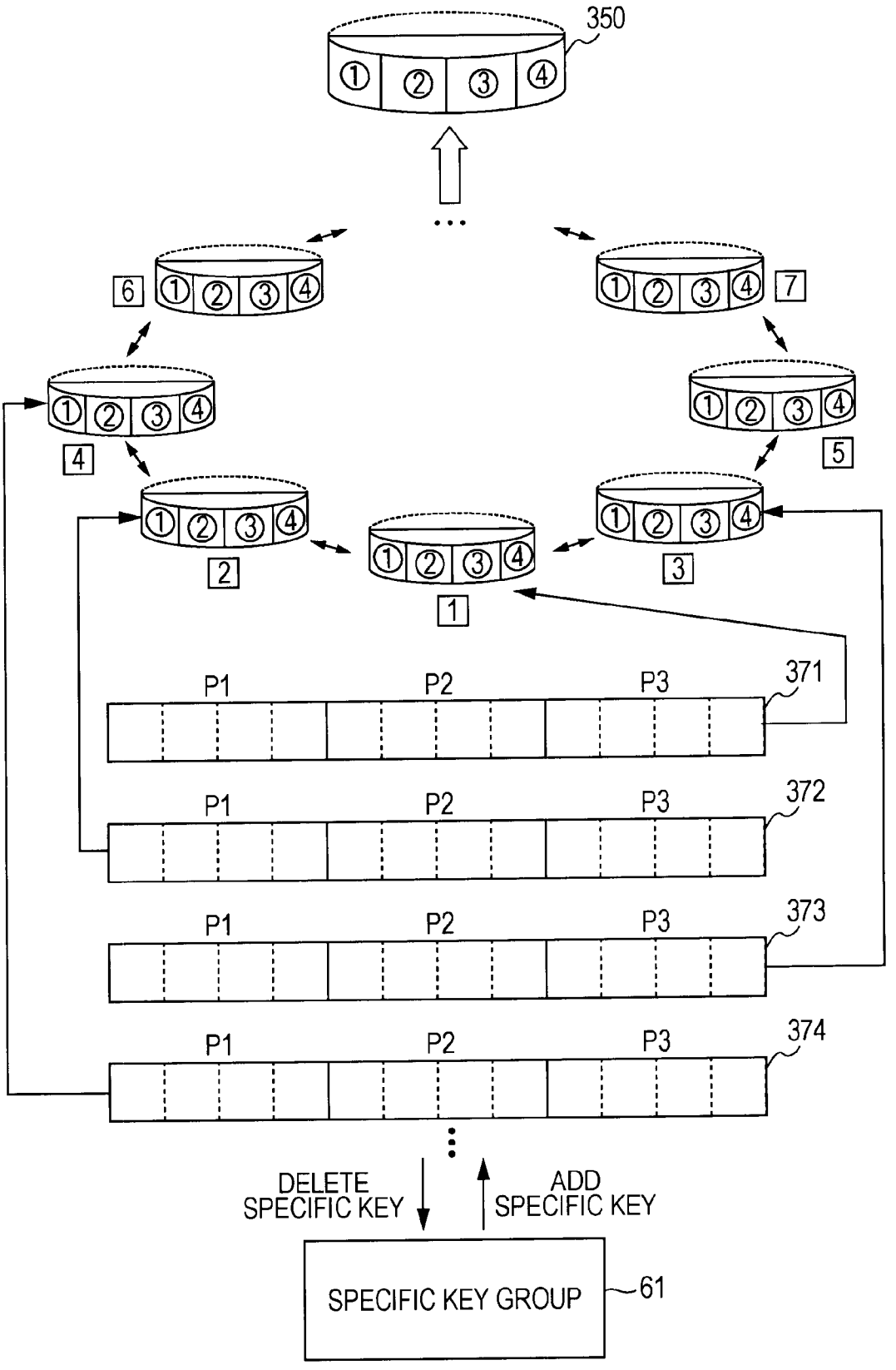

350
①②③④
6
7
4
5
2
3
1
P1
P2
P3
371
372
373
374
DELETE SPECIFIC KEY
ADD SPECIFIC KEY
SPECIFIC KEY GROUP
61

FIG. 28A

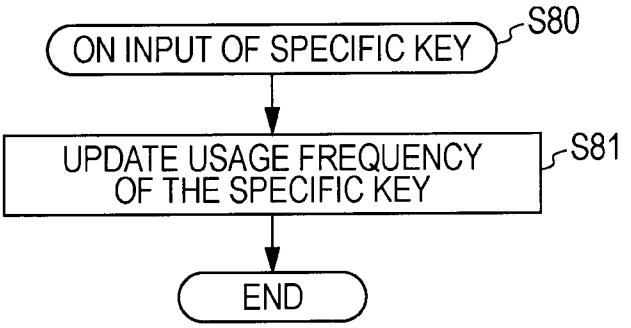
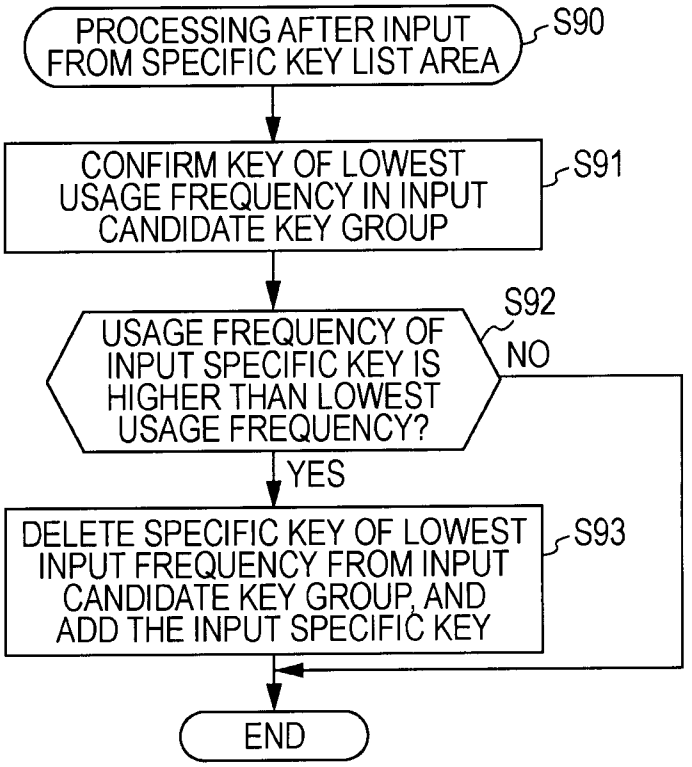


FIG. 28B



MOBILE TERMINAL DEVICE AND INPUT DEVICE

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims the benefit of priority of Provisional Application Ser. No. 61/309,467, filed Mar. 2, 2010, the entire contents of which is incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present disclosure relates to a mobile terminal device having an input section with a touch input region superimposed on a display screen and to an input device provided for such a mobile terminal device.

2. Description of the Related Art

Heretofore, mobile phone terminals have been designed to input characters as well as numerals by assigning characters to numeric keys, or hardware keys, respectively. In this case, two or more characters are assigned to the same key so that a desired character can be input as a result of selecting the corresponding key by switching character types and pushing the key predetermined times. However, this procedure may lead to complicated and time-consuming operation because of an increase in average number of times of pushing the key until it reaches the character of interest.

For improving such a procedure, there is proposed a technology for inputting a desired character by displaying a representative image of character classification on a display screen, operating a rotary input section to specify a desired class to display a list of characters belonging to the class, and then operating the rotary input section again to select the desired character from the list (see, Japanese Unexamined Patent Application Publication No. 2003-256117).

Furthermore, there is also proposed a software keyboard for personal digital assistant, where an input region is defined on a display screen to display a full keyboard. The software keyboard includes keys that allow the user to input a desired character by pointing an input pen at the corresponding key (see, Japanese Unexamined Patent Application Publication No. 2000-322181, which will be also referred to as JP 2000-322181 A).

In recent years, there is also proposed a technology for allowing the user to point a desired character from characters displayed on the display screen on a touch panel using the user's own finger without using an input pen (see, Japanese Unexamined Patent Application Publication No. 2009-288873, which will be also referred to as JP 2009-288873 A).

SUMMARY

The software keyboard described in JP 2000-322181 A is provided for pointing a desired character using a fine-tipped input pen to mimic a real hardware keyboard while making the size of each key smaller.

On the other hand, when pointing by the user's finger, the number of letters which can be displayed at once will be restricted to the minimum even though it is called a full keyboard. For responding to a request for arrangement of many keys on the limited display screen of a mobile terminal device, specific characters, such as various symbols, may be hardly provided.

In a technology disclosed in JP 2009-288873 A, for responding such a request, a set of characters to be displayed

on a display screen at once is divided into several groups, such as those for ten keys, first characters of the respective lines of the Japanese "HIRAGANA" system, and letters of the alphabet, so as to allot two or three words to one of keys assigned to a plurality of sheets. The sheets are layered and displayed and the instruction of the user allows the desired sheet to be selectively displayed on the top. In this case, any of various symbols can be input through an additional screen which can be appeared by selecting a "symbol" key arranged on one corner of each sheet. The same is also applied to punctuation or the like.

In this technology, the additional screen should be displayed every time any of specific characters, such as punctuation and other various symbols, are input.

Thus, every time the input of a character not included in a software keyboard is asked for, it is common for known technologies to make the user switch an input mode to additionally display a list of specific characters on an additional screen.

However, some specific characters to be displayed on the additional screen, such as a comma, a period, and a question mark are frequently used for input of an English text, as well as punctuation and the like for input of a Japanese text. The input operation may be complicated and take a much time for switching an input mode every time the input of such a character is requested by displaying the additional screen. In addition, the continuity of operation can be broken by switching the screen, resulting in a decrease in operability.

If an additional screen for the list of specific characters is displayed while the software keyboard represented on the display is left as it is, an input area for text can be temporary narrowed and the operability of the software keyboard can be decreased.

The present invention takes the aforementioned technologies into consideration and allows a user to input a desired specific key by selecting the corresponding key comparatively quickly and easily without changing a software keyboard present on a display as much as possible and without additionally necessitating an excessively wide display/input area.

A mobile terminal device according to an embodiment of the present invention includes a display section having a display screen, an input section having a touch input region superimposed on the display screen, and a control section that displays a software keyboard having a plurality of keys on the display screen in response to a touching operation on a certain key among the keys. The control section selects the plurality of keys from a set of input candidate key groups and displays them on a specific display region where a plurality of operation keys sequentially arranged on the software keyboard can be displayed. According to a specific operation to the specific display region, the control section allows the display unit to display the plurality of keys after replacement of the plurality of keys displayed on the specific display region in response to a specific operation on the specific display region, and the control section concludes that an input of the key has been performed in response to a touch on a desired specific display region without movement.

In this configuration, among keys displayed on the specific display region, which are those of a specific key group which does not appear on the software keyboard other than the specific display region, a desired key can be comparatively quickly and easily selected and entered while the software keyboard itself is being displayed as it is.

For example, the set of input candidate key groups includes keys corresponding to a plurality of pages in which the plurality of keys are assigned to one page, and the control section

switches pages one by one in response to the specific operation. Such page switching allows the user to confirm more input candidate keys in a short period of time.

The control section may allow the specific display region to display a page position indicator graphically displaying the position of a currently displayed page among all pages of the set of input candidate key groups. The page position indicator allows the user to easily recognize which one of pages of the input candidate key group is represented.

The specific operation may be a flick operation that moves a touching position within the specific display region at a speed not lower than a predetermined speed. Therefore, the user can intuitively perform page switching in no time at all.

An input device according to an embodiment of the present invention is a device which can be built in the above mobile terminal device. The input device includes an input section having a touch input region superimposed on the display screen, and a control section having a software keyboard including a plurality of operation keys to be activated by touching on the display screen. In the specific display region on the display screen, which is able to display a plurality of operation keys continuously arranged on the software keyboard, the control section allows the plurality of keys to be selected from a previously prepared set of input candidate key groups. In addition, the control section allows the display unit to display the plurality of keys after replacement of the plurality of keys displayed on the specific display region in response to a specific operation on the specific display region. Furthermore, the control section determines that the desired key in the specific display region has been input by being touched thereon without movement.

Other embodiments and operation effects thereof according to the present invention will be described later.

According to any embodiment of the present invention, the user is allowed to input a desired specific key by selecting the corresponding key comparatively quickly and easily without changing a software keyboard present on a display as much as possible and without additionally necessitating an excessively wide display/input area.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. **1** is a front view illustrating the appearance of a mobile terminal apparatus according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **2** is a block diagram representing the inner hardware configuration of the mobile terminal;

FIG. **3** is a diagram illustrating an input display screen as an example of display screen for key input used in the mobile phone shown in FIG. **1**;

FIG. **4** is a diagram illustrating a surface unit representing a region for listing specific keys, such as various kinds of symbols;

FIG. **5** is a diagram illustrating an example of switching pages on the specific display region according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **6** is a flow chart illustrating an example of key-input processing according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **7** is a flow chart illustrating a modified example of the processing in FIG. **6**;

FIG. **8** is a diagram illustrating a display screen for key input as another example of the key input display screen according to the embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **9** is a flow chart illustrating an example of key-input processing for the key input display screen shown in FIG. **8**;

FIG. **10** is a flow chart illustrating a modified example of key-input processing according to the embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **11** is a diagram illustrating a modified example of the drum shown in FIG. **8**;

FIG. **12** is a diagram illustrating another modified example of the drum shown in FIG. **8**;

FIG. **13** is a flowchart representing an example of key-stroke processing corresponding to the configuration of the drum shown in each of FIG. **11** and FIG. **12**;

FIG. **14** is a flowchart representing a modified example of the process shown in FIG. **13**;

FIG. **15** is a diagram illustrating an input display screen as an example of display screen for key input used in a mobile terminal device according to a second embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **16** is a diagram illustrating main data to be stored in a storage part according to the second embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **17** is a flow chart of processing that describes the operation of the input device according to the second embodiment of the present embodiment;

FIG. **18** is a diagram illustrating a modified example according to the second embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **19** is a diagram illustrating examples of icons that represent the respective function keys with respect to the modified example shown in FIG. **18**;

FIG. **20** illustrates a flow chart showing processing after functional activation corresponding to the modified example shown in FIG. **18**;

FIG. **21** is a diagram illustrating another modified example of a drum-shaped specific display region like the one shown in FIG. **8**, where a drum position for input candidate key group for each of a plurality of drums displayed on this region, a page position in the drum, and a key position in the page are dynamically changed;

FIG. **22** is a diagram illustrating the specific display region in which a plurality of drums (input candidate groups) are arranged to form a ring and is provided for describing a dynamic change in priority level of the drum position, a dynamic change in drum position, a dynamic change in page position in the drum, and a dynamic change in position of the specific key in the page when displaying in the specific display region;

FIG. **23** is a diagram illustrating the main data stored in the storage section, which is common to FIG. **21** and FIG. **22**;

FIG. **24** is a flow chart that represents the processing after the selection of input candidate key as described in FIG. **21** and FIG. **22**;

FIG. **25** is a diagram illustrating an example of a key input used in a mobile terminal device according to a third embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **26** is a diagram illustrating a modified example of the third embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **27** is a diagram illustrating another modified example of the third embodiment of the present invention; and

FIG. **28** is a flow chart of processing relevant to the learning in the third embodiment.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Hereinafter, preferred embodiments of the present invention will be described with reference to the attached drawings.

FIG. **1** is an external view of a mobile terminal device **10** according to an embodiment of the present invention.

The mobile terminal device **10** includes a display screen **12** that occupies a large area on the front side of its housing **11**. A touch panel **13** is superimposed on the display screen **12**. The touch panel **103** has an input region corresponding to the display region of the display screen **12** to allow the user to perform a touch input operation with a user's finger or the like. A speaker (ear receiver) **108** is arranged on the upper side of the display screen **12** and two or more operation keys **106** (in this example, three keys) are arranged on the lower side thereof. As will be described later, the user enters characters or the like into the mobile terminal device **10** using a software keyboard. Thus, the mobile terminal device **10** is not provided with a hardware full keyboard and a numeric keypad.

Here, the operation principle and configuration of a touch sensor to be employed in this embodiment may be based on one which is common in the art. Thus, the details of the touch sensor will be omitted in the following description.

FIG. **2** is a block diagram representing the inner hardware configuration of the mobile terminal device **10**. The mobile terminal device **10** of the present embodiment is exemplified by a cellular phone terminal.

The mobile terminal device **10** includes a control section **100**, a communication section **102**, a touch panel **103**, an operation key section **106**, a storage section **107**, a voice processing section **110**, and so on, which are connected to one another through a bus **111**.

The control section **100** includes a processor, such as a central processing unit (CPU), and serves as means for controlling each section under the control of software.

The communication unit **102** is connected to a base station (not shown) by wireless communication via an antenna **101** and serves as means for communication via a telephone, an electric mail, or the like.

The touch panel **103** includes a display part **105**, such as a liquid crystal display (LCD) that displays information on its display screen. The touch panel **103** also includes a touch sensor **104** superimposed on the display surface. The touch sensor **104** can sense where the portion (i.e., position) on the display screen the user touches on.

The voice processing section **110** is connected to both a speaker **108** and a microphone **109** to perform voice processing and input/output control.

The operation key section **106** is a hardware key pad for allowing the user to enter instructions or information into the mobile terminal device **10**. However, the hardware key pad is not an indispensable element in the description of the present embodiment.

The storage section **107** includes a memory, for example, a read-only memory for storing various kinds of data as well as computer programs to be executed by the CPU of the control section **100** (which may be a rewritable non-volatile memory, such as a flush memory), and a random access memory (RAM) that offers a work area and a temporally storage area. The storage section **107** may also include a mass storage device, such as an external memory device or a hard disk drive (HDD). As will be described later, the various kinds of data include key data, such as data for specific key groups, as well as control data for input candidate key groups, usage frequency of each of specific keys, usage frequency of each of pages, and various kinds of pointers.

The mobile terminal device **10** may include, but not shown in the figure, any of other structural components, such as a battery, a camera section, a short-range wireless communication section, and a noncontact IC card.

In the configuration of the mobile terminal device **10**, an input device according to an embodiment of the present invention includes the touch sensor **104** and the control section **100**. Here, the touch sensor **104** is an input section having a touch input region superimposed on the surface screen. In addition, the control section **100** allows the display screen to display a software keyboard having a plurality of operation keys which can receive the instructions from the user by touching.

FIG. **3** is a diagram illustrating an input display screen **12***a* as an exemplary display screen for key-input. On this display screen **12***a*, a software keyboard **300** and other software keys are arranged and displayed. This example shows a so-called full keyboard with QWERTY layout. The software keyboard **300** includes character keys **313** with QWERTY layout, a setup key **321**, an input mode key **322**, a symbol key **323**, a specific display region **330**, right and left keys **324** and **325**, an enter (decision) key **326**, and a backspace key **327**. The specific display region **330** is a window-like display region that selectively displays a predetermined number of specific keys (in this example, four specific keys **331**, **332**, **333**, and **334**) among input candidates of a predetermined number of specific keys.

In FIG. **3**, the arrangement of capital letter alphabets is illustrated as an example of the character keys **313** with QWERTY layout. Furthermore, by operating the input mode key **322**, input modes can be cyclically changed from a Japanese KANA input mode, an English alphabet input mode, and a numeric input mode in order, thereby cyclically displaying the software keyboards corresponding to the respective input modes. That is, by pressing or touching the input mode key **322**, the mode of keys being displayed, which corresponds to the character keys **313**, is changed from one mode to another in the order of the KANA mode, the alphabet mode, and the numeric mode. In the case of the numeric mode, a typical numeric key arrangement can be displayed. In the case of the KANA mode, the alphabetic keyboard being displayed may be remained as it is to convert alphabetic letters to Japanese letters by the Roman letter input.

The setup key **321** is a link key for transferring to a character-input setting screen. In the alphabetic character input mode, the setup key **321** is changed to a shift key. The user can capitalize or de-capitalize an alphabetic letter by pressing the shift key.

A symbol key **323** is provided for displaying a region **340** for listing specific keys, such as various symbols, as shown in FIG. **4** (specific key list) in response to the operation of the symbol key **323**. In the present embodiment, the term "specific key" refers to one corresponding to characters, such as various kinds of symbol keys and punctuation, which are not represented on the software keyboard if there is no specific display region as described above. Thus, the specific key list region **340** is a region for displaying a list of such keys. The user can input any of the specific keys by touching the corresponding key (character). If all keys intended for the list display are not be simultaneously displayed on a specific key list region **340**, a so-called page switching and a scrolling operation may be employed to display all keys. As will be disclosed later, the specific keys may include those for activating icons, pictorial symbols, and the like which represent the respective applications and functions.

Right and left keys **324** and **325** are direction-instructing keys which can be used for operating a cursor or the like.

Enter (decision) key **326** and backspace key **327** are known operation keys for determining any operation and deleting an input character, respectively.

The control section **100** selects two or more keys from a previously prepared set of input candidate key groups and then allows the specific display region **330** to display the selected keys. Here, the specific display region **330** is able to

display two or more operation keys continuously arranged on the software keyboard. The control section **100** also switches these two or more keys displayed on the specific display region **330** in response to a specific operation on this region and then displays the switched keys. Furthermore, the control section **100** determines that the desired key in the specific display region **330** has been input by being touched thereon without movement (specifically, one key is touched and then untouched).

As shown in FIG. **3**, the specific display region **330** is a region where a comparatively frequently used key among various sign keys can be input without displaying the specific key list region **340**. In this example, in general, such a region utilizes one where a large-sized (horizontally long) space key is arranged on the center position on the lower side of the QWERTY layout. Briefly, two or more keys are simultaneously displayed on the specific display region **330** and any key being touched by the user can be input.

In FIG. **3**, there is illustrated an example of displaying characters on the character displaying region **311** of the display screen, where characters are directly entered by an inline input method. Alternatively, an additional character input region (not shown) may be formed. First, characters are input in this character input region and then accepted. Subsequently, the determined character string is moved to the character display region **311**.

Furthermore, the character display region **311** is assumed to be used for the body area of mail. Alternatively, the present embodiment is also applicable to a character input box of a memo pad, telephone directory, or the like, an entry field, bulletin board, or the like in a web page, and any character input.

In the character input display screen **12***a* shown in FIG. **3**, a set of input candidate key groups, part of which can be selectively displayed on the specific display region **330**, includes keys corresponding to two or more pages where each page includes two or more keys.

In response to a specific operation, the control section **100** switches the keys to be displayed on the specific display region **330** on the page basis.

FIG. **5** is a diagram illustrating an example of switching pages on the specific display region **330** according to the embodiment of the present invention. In this example, four successive keys can be displayed on the horizontally long specific display region **330**. Every page is provided with four keys, so that keys of three pages can be selectively displayed by switching the pages.

In FIG. **5**A, (a**1**) to (a**3**) are three different pages where each page includes four symbols. Thus, 12 symbols are in total as a sum of three pages and provided as a "previously defined set of input candidate key groups". A page position indicator **335**, a bar extending in a longitudinal direction, is displayed on the lower inner side of the specific display region **330**. The page position indicator **335** is provided for graphically representing the position of a page presently displayed on the specific display region **330** among the whole pages of the set of input candidate key groups.

The set of input candidate key groups may be initially defined by the user. Alternatively, as will be described later, input candidate keys may be automatically replaced depending on the usage frequency on the learning basis.

The pages can be switched from one to another by a specific operation of the user on the specific display region **330**. In this embodiment, the term "specific operation" used herein refers to an operation in which the finger of the user touches on one position on the touch panel and then moves to another position at a speed of not less than a predetermined velocity in a predetermined direction while being touched on the touch panel (such an operation is also known as a "flick operation").

In (a**1**) of FIG. **5**A, the page position indicator **335** indicates that a page on the left side of the three pages arranged in juxtaposition is being displayed. This page includes an underbar, a left single quotation mark, and a right single quotation mark. In this state, the user may touch one point in the specific display region **330** by the finger **50** of the user and a flick operation is then performed in a left direction (direction of the arrow **51**), leading to display the next (center) page as shown in (a**2**) of FIG. **5**A. Such a state can be reflected to the display of the page position indicator **335**. This page includes a space (SP), a comma, a period, and a question mark. In this state, if the user touches one point in the specific display region **330** by his or her finger **50** and then performs a flick operation to the left, then the page on the right end can be displayed as shown in (a**3**) of FIG. **5**A. This state is reflected on the display of the page indicator **335**. This page includes a hyphen, a semicolon, a colon, and an asterisk. In this state, if the user touches one point in the specific display region **330** by his or her finger **50** and then performs a flick operation to the right (in the direction of the arrow **52**), then the page to be displayed to change to the center page as shown in (a**2**) of FIG. **5**A. When considering a state that four keys on a piece of horizontally long paper that represents a key sequence of 12 keys is exposed from a window corresponding to four keys, such an operation resembles an operation of moving a piece of paper to the right or left on a disk by the user's finger (but one flick operation leads to the movement by one page, four keys). Furthermore, the input candidate keys represented on the specific display region **330** may be automatically changed depending on the character species which is presently selected. In the case of a specific character type (for example, a numeric character), any specific display region **330** may be absent.

Referring now to FIG. **5**B, (b**1**) to (b**3**) illustrate a second example of the page configuration of keys displayed in the specific display region **330**. In the example of (a**1**) to (a**3**) of FIG. **5**A, keys included in all pages are different from one another. In contrast, in the example shown in FIG. **5**B allows different pages to include the same key. Any key with high usage frequency may be included in two or more different pages to reduce the number of times of switching the pages. In the example shown in (b**1**) to (b**3**) of FIG. **5**B, a space key (SP) is included in each of the pages. Such an arrangement of the pages can be prepared by default. Alternatively, it may be selectively generated by the setting operation of the user.

Referring now to FIG. **5**C, (c**1**) to (c**3**) illustrate a third example of the page configuration of keys displayed in the specific display region **330**. In the aforementioned example, only character keys are arranged on the specific display region **330**. In contrast, in this example, function keys are also included in addition to the character keys.

In other words, in FIG. **5**C, (c**1**) and (c**3**) are character key pages and (c**3**) is a page of function keys. The term "function key" used herein refers to a key that activates any of functions imparted to the mobile terminal device, such as a mail function, a web browsing function, a telephone directory function, and a map-application (or GPS) function. The function keys in the specific display region **330** are provided with icons that represent the corresponding key functions, respectively. In this case, the number of different characters which can be input using the specific display region **330** decreases in comparison with that of (a**1**) to (a**3**) in FIG. **5**A. In order to avoid such a reduction, an additional page (fourth page or any of the subsequent pages) of a function key may be added to three pages of (a**1**) to (a**3**) in FIG. **5**A. The number of function keys

is not limited to four. Although only one page serves as a function key page in the above description, it may be alternatively considered that function keys may be distributed to two more pages. In addition, each page may include a combination of characteristic keys and function keys.

Referring now to FIG. **5**D, (d**1**) to (d**3**) illustrate a fourth example of the page configuration of keys displayed in the specific display region **330**. In this example, keys represented in the specific display region **330** only include so-called pictorial symbols that use images as their integrants. A page may be also constructed of a combination of the pictorial symbol page and the aforementioned symbol page (not shown).

Referring now to FIG. **5**E, (e**1**) to (e**3**) illustrate a fifth example of the page configuration of keys displayed in the specific display region **330**. In this example, keys represented in the specific display region **330** are only icons that represent the respective functional keys.

In any of these page configurations, the number of pages to be switched in the specific display region **330** is not limited to the above examples. For instance, any number of pages may be employed. In addition, the number of keys per page is not limited to four. In the above examples, each page has the same number of keys and the same size of the key areas. Alternatively, the number of keys and the sizes of the key areas may be different depending on their assigned pages.

FIG. **6** is a flow chart illustrating an example of key-input processing in the present embodiment. This processing can be realized by allowing the control section **100** to read and execute a program stored in the storage section **107** as shown in FIG. **2**. The same may be also applied to the processing of any of other flow charts which will be described later.

The processing of FIG. **6** may be initiated by interruption to the CPU in response to a user's touch in the specific display region **330** (S**10**).

First, it is determined whether a touching position is moved (S**11**). In the determination of the presence of such a movement, for considering an error touching operation, any movement within a minute range from the touching position (for example, within several pixels) is not considered as a substantial movement.

If the hand (i.e., finger or fingers) is off of the touch panel while the touching position is not moved (Yes in S**18**), then it is concluded that the input of a key (character) corresponding to the touching position has been performed (S**19**). Consequently, the present processing is ended.

If it is concluded that the touching position is moved (YES in S**11**), then it is also determined whether the movement is performed in the longitudinal direction of the specific display region **330** (in this example, along the right-to-left direction thereof) (S**12**). This determination can be performed depending on whether the angle of an assumed line connecting between the start and the end of the movement with respect to the right-to-left direction is within a predetermined range. If it is concluded that the line is not along the right-to-left direction, then the process is ended.

If it is concluded that the line is along the right-to-left direction, then the process is ended, then a moving speed is calculated (S**13**). It is confirmed whether the moving speed exceeds a predetermined value V**1** or more (S**14**). If it is less than the predetermined value V**1**, then it is determined that there is no predetermined flick operation. Thus, the process in ended. If it is not less than the predetermined value V**1**, then it is determined that there is the predetermined flick operation. Subsequently, it is further determined whether it is possible to perform a page-switching operation that allows a set of input candidate key groups in the specific display region **330** to be moved in the instructed moving direction along the touching (S**15**). If the end of the page is displayed and another page to be displayed is not present over the end thereof, then it is determined that the page switching is not available. Thus the process is ended.

If it is concluded that it is movable, then the keys are moved in the instructed moving direction (S**16**). The display of the page-position indicator **335** is renewed in response to the page switching (S**17**).

FIG. **7** is a diagram illustrating a modified example of the process shown in FIG. **6**. The descriptions of the same steps as those of the process shown in FIG. **6** will be omitted because of being provided with the same reference numerals as those of FIG. **6**. The process shown in FIG. **7** is provided for keys displayed in the specific display region **330**, which also include functional keys, as described in (c**1**) to (c**3**) of FIG. **5**C. In this case, the control section **100** has a task to initiate a function when it is instructed by touching of the corresponding key.

The process shown in FIG. **7** has the same steps as those of one shown in FIG. **6**, except for the addition of Steps S**18***a* and S**18***b* after the step S**18**. The step **18***a* is a process step for determining whether the key is a function key or not when the user's hand is off of the touch panel. The step **18***b* is a processing step for initiating the function when the key is a function key.

Next, FIG. **8** is a diagram illustrating a display screen **12***b* for key-input as another example of the key-input display screen. The descriptions of the same components as those of the key-input display screen **12***a* shown in FIG. **3** will be omitted because of being provided with the same reference numerals as those of FIG. **3**. The configuration of the display screen **121**) shown in FIG. **8** is the same as one shown in FIG. **3**, except for a specific display region **350** instead of the specific display region **330**. In this example, the specific display region **350** is virtually displayed in the form of a cylindrical drum and keys are arranged on the curved surface of the cylinder. Part of the curved surface on which a plurality of keys is represented is exposed to the specific display region **350** and the drum can be rotated by the flick operation.

A set of input candidate key groups is virtually arranged in the form a ring around the periphery of the drum. The control section **100** switches pages one by one in response to the user's flick operation. One flick operation corresponds to the rotational movement of the drum for one page. Several times of the flick operation leads to one rotation of the drum. There is no rotational end, so that two or more rotations can be continuously performs in the same direction. The number of times of flick operation for attaining one rotation (one turn) of the set of input candidate key groups can be determined by the number of keys included in one page as well as the number of keys in the set of input candidate key groups. In this example, the set of input candidate key groups corresponding to three pages is arranged on the periphery of the drum according to the example shown in FIG. **3**. Therefore, three repetitive flick operations in the same direction allows all of the keys to be displayed once and four repetitive flick operation allows the set of input candidate key groups to be back where one started.

The page configuration illustrated in FIG. **5** is also applicable to the configuration of the specific display region **350** in FIG. **8**. In addition, the number of pages may be two or more but not limited thereto. The number of keys per page is not limited to four. In the above examples, each page has the same number of keys and the same size of the key areas. Alternatively, the number of keys and the sizes of the key areas may be different depending on their assigned pages. Furthermore, the input candidate keys represented on the specific display

region **350** may be automatically changed depending on the type of keys which is presently selected.

Unlike the specific display region **330** of FIG. **3**, as described above, the specific display region **350** has no end of the page. The drum display is preferable because of its rotation in an endless manner. In addition, the endless rotation is free of a reference location. Thus, it is not necessary to display a page position indicator corresponding to the page switching.

Furthermore, a non-drum type display, such as the specific display region **330** of FIG. **3**, may be modified to one capable of switching pages in an endless manner by connecting one end of the page to the other end thereof. Therefore, any embodiment of the present invention does not eliminate such a case.

FIG. **9** is a flow chart illustrating an example of key-input processing for the key-input display screen **12***b* shown in FIG. **8**.

The processing of FIG. **9** may be initiated by interruption to the CPU in response to a user's touch in the specific display region **350** (S**20**).

First, it is confirmed whether a touching position is moved (S**21**). In the determination of the presence of such a movement, for considering an error touching operation, any movement within a minute range from the touching position (for example, within several pixels) is not considered as a substantial movement.

If the hand (i.e., finger or fingers) is off of the touch panel while the touching position is not moved (Yes in S**26**), then it is concluded that the input of a key corresponding to the touching position has been performed (S**27**). Consequently, the present processing is ended.

If it is concluded that the touching position is moved (YES in S**21**), then it is also determined whether the movement is performed in the longitudinal direction of the specific display region **350** (in this example, along the right-to-left direction thereof) (S**22**). This determination can be performed depending on whether the angle of an assumed line connecting between the start and the end of the movement with respect to the right-to-left direction is within a predetermined range. If it is concluded that the line is not along the right-to-left direction, then the process is ended.

If it is concluded that the line is along the right-to-left direction, then the process is ended, then a moving speed is calculated (S**23**). It is confirmed whether the moving speed exceeds a predetermined value V**1** or more (S**24**). If it is less than the predetermined value V**1**, then it is determined that there is no predetermined flick operation. Thus, the process in ended. If it is not less than the predetermined value V**1**, then it is determined that there is the predetermined flick operation. Then, the drum is rotated by one page (S**25**). Therefore, a page-switching operation is performed so that a set of input candidate key groups in the specific display region **350** can be moved by one page in the instructed moving direction along the touching. Subsequently, the present processing is ended.

Furthermore, in the configuration of the display screen **12***b*, a key-basis movement (rotation) can be performed by an operation different from the above flick operation. For example, such an operation may be one that allows the touching position to be moved at a speed less than a predetermined speed to perform the key-based movement (rotation) (hereinafter, such an operation will be referred to a drag operation). Therefore, the user is possible to define a desired position as a page break position.

FIG. **10** is a flow chart illustrating a modified example of key-input processing in the present embodiment. The descriptions of the same steps as those of the process shown in FIG. **9** will be omitted because of being provided with the same reference numerals as those of FIG. **9**. The process shown in FIG. **10** has the same steps as those of one shown in FIG. **9**, except for the addition of step S**28** after the step S**24**. In the step S**28**, the drum is rotated by one key in response to a drag operation. The rotation of the drum by one key can change the boundaries between the adjacent pages at the time of subsequent page-switching operations. Alternatively, the rotation by one key may be temporal and the boundaries between the pages to be displayed when the pages are switched by flick operation can be constant.

Furthermore, even though any specific flow is not illustrated, the amount of the rotation may be changed within the number of keys per page depending on a moving distance attained by the drag operation. For example, the number of keys to be rotated (moved) may be defined depending on every moving distance, for example one key for the moving distance corresponding to a certain length×1, not more than two key for X**2**, and not more than three key for X**3**.

FIG. **11** is a diagram illustrating a modified example of the drum shown in FIG. **8**. The ring-shaped drum corresponding to a set of input candidate key groups assumed in the specific display region **350** shown in FIG. **8** is used as a single-stage drum in the vertical direction (rotational axis direction). In the example of FIG. **11**, on the other hand, a drum has a plurality of stages (three stages in this figure) which are coaxially superimposed on one another in a virtual manner. In other wards, a drum with a plurality of stages stacked on one another is virtually prepared. Then, different sets of input candidate key groups are allocated to the respective stages of the drum. One of the plurality of stages is selectively exposed to the specific display region **350**. In this case, the drum is rotated in response to a flick operation in the first direction (for example, the right-to-left direction). Then the stage of the drum is moved in response to a flick operation in the second direction perpendicular to the first direction.

Such a configuration of the drum leads to an increase in number of keys which can be displayed on the specific display region **350** as far as the input candidate key group on one input candidate groups on the respective ring-shaped stages are equal.

In this example, the number of stages is three but no limited to. It may be two or more. The vertical stacked stages includes end stages on the opposite sides, so that a stage-position indicator (not shown) representing the position of the stage presently displayed may be formed.

In addition during the movement of the stages, the opposite end stages may be connected to each other to allow the stages to be moved cyclically.

FIG. **12** is a diagram illustrating another modified example of the drum according to FIG. **8**. In this modified example, a plurality of drums having different rotation axes is prepared and one drum is then selected from them. This case assumes a plurality of drums makes a loop, or arranged in a ring shape. Furthermore, each drum shown in FIG. **12** may be of a multistage configuration, such as one described above, by coaxially adding one or more additional drums as shown in FIG. **11**.

FIG. **13** is a flowchart representing an example of keystroke processing corresponding to the configuration of the drum shown in each of FIG. **11** and FIG. **12**.

The processing of FIG. **13** may be initiated by interruption to the CPU in response to a user's touch in the specific display region **350** (S**30**). First, it is confirmed whether a touching position is moved (S**31**). In the determination of the presence of such a movement, for considering an error touching opera-

tion, any movement within a minute range from the touching position (for example, within several pixels) is not considered as a substantial movement.

If a hand (finger) separates from a touch panel while there was no movement of a touch position (S41, Yes), it is judged that an input of a key corresponding to the touch position was performed (S42). Consequently, the present processing is ended.

If it is concluded that the touching position is moved (YES in S31), then it is also determined whether the movement is performed in the vertical direction of the specific display region **350** (in this example, along the axial direction of the drum) (S32). This determination can be performed depending on whether the angle of an assumed line connecting between the start and the end of the movement with respect to the right-to-left direction is within a predetermined range.

If it is concluded that the movement is performed in the vertical direction, then it is determined whether it is movable to the instructed next drum in the vertical direction (S33). If it is possible, the touching position is moved to the upper or lower drum in response to the instruction (S34)) and the process is then ended.

If it is concluded that the touching position is not moved in the vertical direction in the step S32, then it is determined whether it is moved in the horizontal direction (S36). If it is concluded that the movement is not in the horizontal direction, then the process is ended.

If it is concluded that the line is along the right-to-left direction, then the process is ended, then a moving speed is calculated (S36). It is confirmed whether the moving speed exceeds a predetermined value V2 or more (S37). If the moving speed is less than the predetermined value V2, then it is confirmed whether the moving speed is not less than the predetermined value V1 (<V2) (S39). If the moving speed is less than V2, then it is confirmed that the first flick operation is performed and the same drum is then rotated by one page (S40). Therefore, a page-switching operation is performed so that a set of input candidate key groups in the specific display region **350** can be moved by one page in the instructed moving direction along the touching. If it is less than V1, then the process is ended.

In step S37, if the moving speed is more than the predetermined value V2, then it is concluded that the movement is performed by the high-speed second flick operation but not by the first flick operation to move the touching position to the left or right drum (S38). Subsequently, the present processing is ended.

FIG. **14** is a flowchart representing a modified example of the process shown in FIG. **13**. The descriptions of the same steps as those of the process shown in FIG. **13** will be omitted because of being provided with the same reference numerals as those of FIG. **13**. The process shown in FIG. **14** has the same steps as those of one shown in FIG. **13**, except for an additional step **39***a* in which the drum is rotated by one key at a branching point of "NO" at the step S39 for determining whether the moving speed is not less than V1. Consequently, the boundary between the pages can be changed.

As explained above, according to the present embodiment, when entering a key which is not included in a software key board but comparatively high frequency in common use, a specific key of interest can be entered by a comparatively quick and simple operation, every time without updating the whole display of the software keyboard by switching an input mode or without displaying another list screen in addition to the software keyboard.

Next, a mobile terminal device according to a second embodiment of the present invention will be described. The mobile terminal device of the present invention has the same hardware configuration as one shown in FIG. **1** and FIG. **2**. In the above first embodiment, the input candidate key groups are used for a plurality of pages to be displayed on the specific display region **330**. In addition, both the page position (the positional relationship between the pages) and the specific-key position in the page are constant.

In contrast, in the second embodiment, both the page position (the positional relationship between the pages) and the specific-key position in the page can be dynamically changed, while the input candidate key groups are used for a plurality of pages to be displayed on the specific display region **330**. Therefore, at the time of selecting input candidate key groups, the results of the selection are successively studied to obtain the usage frequency of each input candidate and the usage frequency of each page. Furthermore, the page position and the key position in the page are changed in response to the obtained usage frequency. In addition, as shown in FIG. **15**, the positions of pages P1, P2, and P3 of input candidate key groups **62** are variable with respect to one another. In three pages for the input candidate key groups **62**, it is assumed that the page sandwiched between two pages is displayed on the specific display region **330** as an initial state. Then, the order of priorities of the page positions is previously determined so as to be represented by the respective boxed numbers in the figure in advance. In this example, the page with high usage frequency (page P2 in the example of FIG. **15**A) is positioned in the center of the input candidate key groups **62**. Next, the page with high usage frequency (page P1 in the example of FIG. **15**A) is positioned on the left side of the input candidate key groups **62**. Next, the page with high usage frequency (page P3 in the example of FIG. **15**A) is positioned on the right side of the input candidate keys **62**.

FIG. **15**B illustrates an example of changes in page positions of the input candidate key groups **62**. As shown in the present example, if the number of pages is three, the input candidate key groups **62** located on different page positions may be present in six ways.

In addition, a priority level can be also attached to a key position in the page, like a circled number given to each key position in the specific display region **330** shown in FIG. **15**A. Therefore, depending on the usage frequency of each specific key, the key positions in the page can be varied. FIG. **15**C illustrates a modified example of an in-page key sequence of the page P2. As shown in the present example, if the number of keys in page is four, 24 pages with different key positions can be present.

The priority levels of the respective page positions and the priority levels of the respective keys in the page are not limited to those described in the aforementioned example. A way of providing preferable priority levels may be changed depending on the user's dominant arm, preference, and the like. Thus, their priority orders may be variably set by the user.

FIG. **16** illustrates the main data to be stored in the storage section **107** in the present embodiment. In other words, the storage section **107** stores various kinds of data for specific key group **61**, input candidate key group **62**, usage frequency **63** of page, usage frequency **64** of specific key in page, current page position **65**, current key position in page **66**, active page pointer **67**, and the like.

The specific key group **61** includes all specific keys which can be used in the mobile terminal device **10** represented by the specific key list region **330** shown in FIG. **4**. The data may be font data corresponding to a key code or the like. The input candidate key group **62** is a group of specific keys to be provided as input candidates for two or more pages to be

displayed on the specific display region **330** and may be a subset of the specific key group **61**. The usage frequency **63** of the page is data representing the usage frequency of each page. The usage frequency of the page can be calculated such that if any one of specific keys in one page is selected, then the page is deemed to be a used one. The usage frequency of a specific key in page **64** is data that represents the usage frequency of a specific key in each page. The current page position **65** is data that represents the current position of each page. In the above example, the current page position **65** is one of "middle", "left", and "right" (each corresponding to the numeral in square). The key position in the current page **66** is data that represents the position of a key in each page. Specifically, it represents a position with circled number corresponding to each of keys in the page. The active page pointer **67** is data that represents a page actually appeared in the specific display region **330**. This data will be referred for the representation of the page position indicator as described above. Briefly, this data is page discrimination information (for example, P**1**, P**2**, or P**3**) for discriminating one page from the other.

FIG. **17** is a flow chart of processing, which describes the operation of the input device according to the present embodiment. In the figure, this processing is processing S**50** which can be executed after the selection of an input candidate key. The processing S**50** may not be executed after every time any input candidate key is selected. For example, after completing an application with entering of specific keys, the processing S**50** in FIG. **17** may be collectively executed for all the keys.

First, the usage frequency of specific key is updated (S**51**). Subsequently, the usage frequency of page where the specific key belongs is updated (S**52**). Then, it is checked whether the usage frequency of specific key is revered (S**53**). The term "revered" means that, as a result of updating a certain specific key, the usage frequency of this specific key becomes higher than the current usage frequency of another specific key (input candidate key). In this case, the display position of such a specific key in the page is changed to another display position with higher priority level (S**54**).

Then, it is checked whether the usage frequency of page has been reversed (S**55**). In this case, likewise, the term "reversed" means that, as a result of updating a certain specific page, the usage frequency of the specific page becomes higher than the current usage frequency of another page. In such a case, the display position of the page is changed to another display position with higher priority level (S**56**).

Next, a modified example will be described for dynamically changing the page position and the specific key position in the page when icons representing the function keys corresponding to a plurality of pages are selectively displayed on the specific display region **330** as shown in (e**1**) to (e**3**) of FIG. **5**.

FIG. **18** is a diagram illustrating main data to be stored in the storage section **107** in this exemplary modification. The storage section **107** includes functional icon group **71**, usage frequency of function **72**, a usage frequency of group **73**, current page position **74**, the position of icon in current page **75**, active page pointer **76**, and the like. The functional icon group **71** is a set of icon data that represents function keys for activating functions used in the mobile terminal device. Exemplary icons representing the respective function keys are illustrated in FIG. **19**. In this example, 16 icons in total are divided into four groups depending on their corresponding functions. Group A is a message group relevant to exchanges of messages, for example a telephone application, a mailing application, an address book application, and a messenger application. Group B is a media group related to replay n or the like of various kinds of media, for example a music application, a movie application for video replay, a game application for playing games, and an on-segment broadcasting application for receiving/playing one-segment broadcasting.

Group C is a convenient functional group relevant to various kinds of convenient functions, for example a map application using a global positioning system (GPS), a weather application for weather forecasts, a schedule application for schedule management, and an web application for browsing the Web. Group D is an additional group including, for example, an initial-setting application, a data box, a camera application, and a calculator application.

If four icons of each group are included in one page, what is necessary is just to prepare four pages to make all the icons the selection candidates. The usage frequency of function **72** is data that represents the usage frequency of each function to be updated every time the function is activated. The activation of each function is not only the selection of the corresponding function key from the specific display region **330** on a key-input screen but also means the activation of such a function on another screen, such as a standby screen or an operation menu screen. In other words, any function activated via any screen can be counted as one being used. The usage frequency of group **73** is data showing usage frequency for every group where the function belongs. The current page position **74**, the position of icon in current page **75**, and the active page pointer **76** are the same as the current page position **65**, the present key position in the page **66**, and the active page pointer **66** shown in FIG. **16**, respectively.

FIG. **20** illustrates a flow chart showing processing S**60** after functional activation that corresponds to the modified example shown in FIG. **18**.

First, the usage frequency of the activated function is updated (S**61**). Next, the usage frequency of group (page) belonging to the function is updated (S**62**). Then, it is confirmed whether the usage frequency of the function in the group has been reversed (S**63**). The term "revered" means that, as a result of updating a certain function, the usage frequency of this function becomes higher than the current usage frequency of another function. In this case, the display position of such a function in the group is changed to another display position with higher priority level (S**64**).

Subsequently, it is confirmed whether the usage frequency of the group is reversed (S**65**). The term "revered" means that, as a result of updating a certain specific group, the usage frequency of this specific group becomes higher than the current usage frequency of another group. In such a case, the group's display position is changed to a display position of higher priority level (S**66**).

FIG. **21** is a diagram illustrating another modified example of a drum-shaped specific display region **350** like the one shown in FIG. **8**. In this example, a drum position for input candidate key group for each of a plurality of drums displayed on this region **350**, a page position in the drum, and a key position in the page are dynamically changed.

For the drum-shaped specific display region **350**, as shown in FIG. **21**, two or more input candidate key groups, three groups **361**, **362**, and **363** in this example, are prepared and superimposed in the form of a drum (hereinafter, also referred to as a "drum" for convenience). One of the input candidate key groups **361**, **362**, and **363**, which corresponds one page, can be displayed on the specific display region **350**. The priority level of each drum (input candidate key group) is previously determined and represented by a boxed number in the figure. In this example, as an initial state, it is assumed that the middle input candidate key group **362** will be selected as

one to be displayed on the specific display region **350**. Then, the middle stage of the drum is a drum position of the highest priority level. Furthermore, a flick operation is generally considered such that the flick operation in the upward movement can be easier than one in the downward movement. The upper drum position, which is selected by a flick operation from the middle input candidate key group **362** to the lower state in the initial state, is regarded as one having the second highest priority level. Furthermore, the lower drum position is regarded one having the third highest priority level. Therefore, an example of the input candidate group with the highest usage frequency, the input candidate key group **362** in the example shown in FIG. **15**A, is brought into the middle stage. The input candidate key group with the next highest usage frequency (input candidate key group **361** in the example shown in FIG. **15**A) is brought into the upper stage. The input candidate key group with the third highest usage frequency (input candidate key group **363** in the example shown in FIG. **15**A) is brought into the lower stage. The user can select either of input candidate key groups **361**, **362**, and **363** by the flip operation in the vertical direction.

In the initial state, the selected input candidate key group is displayed by its predetermined page on the specific display region **350**. The page position on the drum can be provided with its priority level in a manner similar to one described above. At the time of displaying the specific display region **350**, the current page of the highest priority level on the middle stage of the drum can be displayed. The user can change one page to another by the flip operation in the horizontal direction.

The key position in each page is provided with a priority level with a circled number as described above. The key position in the page can be changed depending on the usage frequency of the specific key in the page.

FIG. **22** is a diagram illustrating the specific display region **350** in which a plurality of drums (input candidate groups) are virtually distributed and arranged to form a ring. FIG. **22** is provided for describing a dynamic change in priority level of the drum position, a dynamic change in drum position, a dynamic change in page position in the drum, and a dynamic change in position of the specific key in the page when selectively displaying one drum in the specific display region **350**.

The priority level of an initial drum position is previously determined and represented by a boxed number in the figure. In the case of the example shown in the figure, the drum (input candidate key group) located at a position is initially selected and then indicated by the boxed number **1**. A box with a second priority level is represented by the boxed number **2** and located on the left of the drum represented by the boxed number **1** and a box with a third priority level is represented by the boxed number **3** is on the right thereof. In this way, the drum near one initially selected is provided with a higher priority level. This is because such a drum can be accessed by a smaller number of flip operations. The priority level of the drum in the horizontal direction is the same as one in the case of the non-drum type as described above.

FIG. **23** is a diagram illustrating the main data stored in the storage section **107**, which is common to FIG. **21** and FIG. **22**. That is, the storage section **107** includes an input candidate group **82** for each drum, usage frequency of drum **83**, a usage frequency of page for every drum **84**, a usage frequency of specific key in page **85**, a current drum position **86**, current page position **87**, and a key position in current page **88**.

As described above, the specific key group **61** includes all the specific keys which can be used in the mobile terminal device **10**, such as those represented in the specific key list region **330**. The input candidate key group **82** for each drum is a group of specific keys to be provided as input candidates for two or more pages to be displayed on the specific display region **330** and may be a subset of specific key groups **61**. These keys correspond to input candidate keys **361**-**363**, **371**-**374**, and so on of FIG. **21** and FIG. **22** as described above. The usage frequency **83** of the drum is data representing the usage frequency of each drum. The usage frequency **84** of the page for each drum is data representing the usage frequency of each page for each drum. The usage frequency of a specific key in page **85** is data that represents the usage frequency of a specific key in each page. The current drum position **86** represents the position of the drum currently displayed on the specific display region **350**. The current page position **87** is data that represents the current position of each page in the drum. Like the above example, the current page position **65** is one of "middle", "left", and "right" (each corresponding to the numeral in square). The key position in the current page **88** is data that represents the position of a key in each page. Specifically, it represents a position with circled number corresponding to each of keys in the page.

FIG. **24** is a flow chart that represents the processing S**70** after the selection of input candidate key as described in FIG. **21** and FIG. **22**.

In the figure, this processing is processing S**70** which can be executed after the selection of an input candidate key. The processing S**70** may not be executed after every time any input candidate key is selected. For example, after completing an application with entering of specific keys, the processing S**70** in FIG. **24** may be collectively executed for all the keys.

First, the usage frequency of specific key is updated (S**21**). Subsequently, the usage frequency of page where the specific key belongs is updated (S**72**). Subsequently, the usage frequency of page where the specific key belongs is updated (S**73**). Then, it is checked whether the usage frequency of specific key is revered (S**74**). If the reversion occurs, the display position of such a specific key in the page is changed to another display position with higher priority level (S**75**).

Subsequently, it is confirmed whether the usage frequency of the page is reversed (S**76**). In the case of such reversion, the display position of the page is changed to another display position with higher priority level (S**77**).

Subsequently, it is confirmed whether the usage frequency of the drum is reversed (S**78**). In the case of such reversion, the drum position is changed to another display position with higher priority level (S**79**).

Next, a mobile terminal device according to a third embodiment of the present invention will be described, where an input candidate key group is automatically updated on the base of the usage frequency obtained by learning the status of using by the user. The mobile terminal device of the present invention has the same hardware configuration as one shown in FIG. **1** and FIG. **2**.

In this case, the control section **100** has a function of displaying a list of specific key group, such as the specific key list region **340** of FIG. **4**, a function of learning the usage frequency of each specific key, and a function of replacing keys in a set of input candidate key groups by using the usage frequency. The specific keys used as targets where the use frequencies thereof can be determined in the present embodiment include those not included in the input candidate key group.

FIG. **25** illustrates an example of replacing a specific key in the input candidate key group **62** shown in FIG. **15** with a specific key in the specific key group **61** based on the usage frequency of the former. If the usage frequency of the specific key present in the specific key group **61** but not present in the input candidate key group **62** is higher than the lowest usage

frequency of the specific key in the input candidate key group **62**, the specific key of the lowest usage frequency is deleted from the input candidate key group **62** and, instead, the corresponding specific key in the specific key group **61** is added to the input candidate key group **62**.

FIG. **26** is a diagram illustrating a modified example of the third embodiment, where a specific key in any of the input candidate key groups **361** to **363** shown in FIG. **21** is replaced with a specific key in the specific key group **61** based on the usage frequency of the former. In this example, comparing with the example shown in FIG. **25**, a more number of input candidate key groups is used. However, operations of removing and adding a specific key are similar to those illustrated in FIG. **25**.

FIG. **27** is a diagram illustrating a modified example of the third embodiment, where a specific key in any of the input candidate key groups **371** to **374** shown in FIG. **22** is replaced with a specific key in the specific key group **61** based on the usage frequency of the former. In this example, comparing with the example shown in FIG. **26**, a more number of input candidate key groups is used. However, operations of removing and adding a specific key are similar to those illustrated in FIG. **25** and FIG. **26**.

FIG. **28** is a flow chart of processing relevant to the learning in the third embodiment.

FIG. **28**A is a diagram illustrating processing S**80** activated when the specific key is entered. At the time of entering a specific key, the frequency of using the specific key is calculated ant the usage frequency data **107***b* is then updated (S**81**). The specific key may be entered from the specific key list region **340** or from the specific display region **330**.

FIG. **28**B is a diagram illustrating processing performed after input of a key from the specific key list region **340**. First, among the current input candidate keys, a key with the least usage frequency is confirmed (S**91**). Subsequently, it is confirmed whether the usage frequency of the specific key entered from the specific key list region **340** exceeds the least usage frequency (S**92**). If it is not exceeded (No in S**92**), then the process is ended as it is. If it exceeds (Yes in S**92**), then a specific key of the lowest input frequency at the present is removed from the input candidate key group and the input specific key is added to the input candidate key group (S**93**).

According to the third embodiment, the usage status of the specific key by the user is learned without user's awareness. The input candidate group is successively updated so that a specific key with higher usage frequency can be automatically displayed on the specific display region **300**. Furthermore, in the case of using any of the aforementioned function key, the third embodiment may be not applied to the functional keys. According to the embodiment, the key group with a comparatively high usage frequency can be automatically customized depending on the usage status of the user.

In the above description, preferred embodiments of the present invention have been described. Various modifications and variations other than those described above will be allowable. For example, but not shown in the figure, the configuration of the display screen shown in FIG. **3** may be modified such that the page switching and the key-based movement may be selectively performed according to the moving speed of the touching position. The specific display region utilizes the position of a space key arranged on the center of the lower side of the QWERTY layout. However, the position of the space key is not limited to such a position. Alternatively, the space key may be placed on another position. In the above description, the removal of a specific key from the input candidate key group and the addition thereof from the specific key to the input candidate group may be manually performed by the user.

What is claimed is:

1. A mobile terminal device, comprising:

a display including a first display section configured to display a stationary first plurality of operation keys including operation keys corresponding to character inputs and a second display section configured to display a second plurality of operation keys configured to rotate in a drum-like manner;

a touch sensor configured to receive a touch input corresponding to at least one of the first plurality of operation keys displayed in the first display section and the second plurality of operation keys displayed in the second display section; and

a controller configured to select the second plurality of operation keys displayed in the second display section based on a predetermined set of operation keys stored in memory, and switch the second plurality of operation keys displayed in the second display section to a third plurality of operation keys based on predetermined touch input received at the second display section, wherein

the touch sensor is configured to detect a moving touch operation in the second display section, and

the controller is configured to switch the second plurality of operation keys displayed in the second display section to the third plurality of operation keys based on the moving touch operation and control the display to simultaneously display the third plurality of operation keys in the second display section and the first plurality of operation keys in the first display section,

the second plurality of operation keys are assigned to a first page of operation keys and the third plurality of operation keys are assigned to a second page of operation keys,

the controller switches from the first page to the second page based on the moving touch operation, and

the controller is configured to display a page indicator in the second display section graphically indicating a position of a currently displayed page among a plurality of available pages of operation key display groups.

2. The mobile terminal device according to claim **1**, wherein

the touch sensor is configured to detect a single touch input at one of the second plurality of operation keys in the second display section, and

the controller is configured to activate an operation corresponding to the one of the second plurality of operation keys.

3. The mobile terminal device according to claim **1**, wherein

the touch sensor is configured to detect a moving touch operation at one of the second plurality of operation keys in the second display section, and

the controller is configured to compare a speed of the moving touch operation against a predetermined threshold value and activate an operation corresponding to the one of the second plurality of operation keys when the speed of the moving touch operation is less than the predetermined threshold value.

4. The mobile terminal device according to claim 1, wherein

the controller is configured to cyclically switch between the second plurality of operation keys displayed in the second display section and the third plurality of operation keys.

5. The mobile terminal device according to claim 1, wherein

the second plurality of operation keys displayed in the second display section include operation keys corresponding to functions of the mobile terminal device, which initiate a program at the mobile terminal device when selected.

6. The mobile terminal device according to claim 1, wherein

the second plurality of operation keys displayed in the second display section include operation keys corresponding to character inputs.

7. The mobile terminal device according to claim 1, wherein

said controller is configured to obtain a usage frequency of each of said second plurality of operation keys, and change positions of the second plurality of operation keys based on said usage frequency.

8. The mobile terminal according to claim 1, wherein

said controller is configured to obtain a usage frequency of each of said first plurality of operation keys and said second plurality of operation keys, and change positions of said first and second pages of said operation keys based on said usage frequency.

9. The mobile terminal device according to claim 1, wherein

the controller switches the second plurality of operation keys in an endless loop.

10. The mobile terminal device according to claim 1, wherein

the second plurality of operation keys and the third plurality of operation keys are configured to be switched bi-directionally.

11. The mobile terminal device according to claim 1, wherein

the second plurality of operation keys and the third plurality of operation keys include the same character.

12. The mobile terminal device according to claim 1, wherein

the second plurality of operation keys and the third plurality of operation keys include pictorial symbols.

13. The mobile terminal device according to claim 1, wherein

the second plurality of operation keys or the third plurality of operation keys include a combination of character keys and functional keys.

14. A non-transitory computer-readable medium including computer program instructions, which when executed by a mobile terminal device, cause the mobile terminal device to perform a method comprising:

displaying, in a first display section of the mobile terminal device, a stationary first plurality of operation keys including operation keys corresponding to character inputs;

displaying, in a second display section of the mobile terminal device, a second plurality of operation keys configured to rotate in a drum-like manner;

receiving a moving touch operation in the second display section;

selecting the second plurality of operation keys displayed in the second display section based on a predetermined set of operation keys stored in memory; and

switching the second plurality of operation keys displayed in the second display section to a third plurality of operation keys based on the moving touch operation and simultaneously displaying the third plurality of operation keys in the second display section and the first plurality of operation keys in the first display section, wherein

the second plurality of operation keys are assigned to a first page of operation keys and the third plurality of operation keys are assigned to a second page of operation keys and the switching includes switching from the first page to the second page based on the moving touch operation; and

displaying a page indicator in the second display section graphically indicating a position of a currently displayed page among a plurality of available pages of operation key display groups.

15. The non-transitory computer-readable medium according to claim 14, further comprising:

detecting a single touch input at one of the second plurality of operation keys in the second display section; and

activating an operation corresponding to the one of the second plurality of operation keys.

16. The non-transitory computer-readable medium according to claim 14, further comprising:

activating an operation corresponding to the one of the second plurality of operation keys when the speed of the moving touch operation is less than the predetermined threshold value.

* * * * *